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LECTURES

ON

The Principles

OF

UNITARIANISM.

By J. S. HYNDMAN,

MINISTER OF THE UNITARIAN CHAPEL, ALNWICK.

Πάντα δοκιμάζετε. PAUL.

"I desire only to have things fairly represented as they really are; no evidence smothered or stifled on either side. Let every reader see what may be justly pleaded here or there, and no more; and then let it be left to his impartial judgment after a full view of the case. Misrepresentation will do a good cause harm, and will not be long of service to a bad one."—*Dr. Waterland.*

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INTRODUCTION.

With regard to the major part of mankind, traditionary prejudices and early associations have a predominant influence, imparting a tincture to every object, and leaving traces on every conclusion. The mind may frequently rise above them, discard them, despise them, and leave them at an infinite distance; but it is still held by the fine and invisible threads of its antiquated feelings and opinions, which, whenever its vigour relaxes, pull it back into the limits from which it had burst away in the plenitude of its power. It is pleasing, however, to observe, that the active powers of intellect are always engaged in some point which interests the mind, and that even over long-established and much-revered principles it will cast the eye of scrutiny as a matter of course. On every controvertible subject there is a certain train of doubts, difficulties, and objections, which nothing but utter ignorance can suppress; and would candour on every occasion pursue its course in fair argumentation, what acceleration might be given to the march of truth!

All error is the consequence of narrow and partial views, and can be removed only by having a question presented in all its possible bearings, or, in other words, by unlimited discussion. It is only by the unrestrained exercise of our faculties that we can hope to attain correct opinions, and our success in every subject will essentially depend upon the completeness of examination. "Two sorts of learned men there are," says Bishop Berkeley. "One who candidly seek truth by rational means. These are never averse to have their principles looked into and examined by the test of reason. Another sort there is who learn by *rote* a set of principles and a way of thinking which happen to be in vogue. These betray themselves by their anger and surprise, whenever their opinions are freely canvassed."

The persecution of private antipathy and public odium too much prevails. Deviations from established opinions are regarded by the indiscriminating with as much horror as flagrant violations of morality. In the ordinary ranks of men, where exploded prejudices often linger for ages, this is scarcely to be wondered at; but it is unaccountable to witness the prevalence of the same spirit in the republic of letters; to see mistake in speculation pursued with all the warmth of moral indignation. He who believes an opinion on the authority of others, who has taken no pains to investigate its claims to credibility, nor weighed the objections to the evidence on which it rests, is lauded for his acquiescence; while obloquy from every side is too often heaped on those who have minutely searched into the subject, and been led to an opposite conclusion. †

It is, however, one great source of satisfaction to reflect that reproach and invective must now in most cases content that selfish bigotry which in a former age would have had recourse to more formidable weapons. What I most lament is not the fulminations of party-spirited men, but their endeavours to misrepresent our principles and arguments; and that a system that was embraced by Newton and Locke, and by many of the most enlightened divines both of the established church and among dissenters, is in this place almost wholly unknown. Would men act a rational and candid part, they would acquaint themselves with the nature and evidence of Unitarianism more than seems in general to be the case. All that we want is an examination of arguments, which, in our opinion, have never yet been refuted.

The following form but a small proportion of a Course of Lectures delivered here during the winter of 1822,3. Several others on the Person of Christ, and on Atonement and the Mediation of Christ, are reserved for a future occasion.

† See "Essays on the Formation and Publication of Opinions."

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LECTURES

ON

The Principles of Unitarianism.

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

ACTS XXVIII. 22.

But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.

CHRISTIANITY for many years after its first introduction was the object of detestation. It was decidedly opposed to the prejudices and predispositions of Jew and Gentile, and directly hostile to the vices of both. In its nature and design it was congenial to none of those long-established and fondly-cherished notions of political glory which had been associated with the name of Messiah by the former; and its doctrines presented nothing that suited that high-towering and infinitude-grasping spirit of speculation which distinguished the systems of the latter.

The mean circumstances and ignominious death of our religion's Founder, the illiterate character of his disciples, and the wide contrariety of his precepts to many of the darling passions and indulged propensities of human na-

ture, were considered as evidences of its fanatical character too strong to be counterbalanced by any opposite proof. Not countenanced by the honourable, the learned, and the powerful, it was esteemed a system fit only for little and vulgar minds, the dream of the mad devotees of superstition, or the offspring of imposture and presumption. And it was no doubt unhesitatingly thought that it would quickly fall into that degradation and insignificance from which it was conceived to have sprung. Mankind were then as they are now—more inclined to adhere blindly and tenaciously to the dictates of their ancestors, and indolently to yield to the swaying impulse of early attachments, and to pronounce with dogmatism, rashness, and fury, upon that which waged war with their settled principles and unfounded opinions, than seriously, calmly, and impartially to examine the merits of a propounded system, or allow themselves to weigh the evidence that could be brought forward in its defence.

With regard to no denomination of the Christian world at the present day can the description of the treatment that Christianity met with at its first establishment be applied with so much truth, as to that sect under the standard of which we range ourselves. "Bigotry ceases to be odious so long as it confines its hostility to us." Our principles and our characters are branded with every epithet that implies presumption and impiety.

Many, however, as our enemies are; rude and severe as are their attacks; we do by no means wish to ward them off by any compromise of our principles, or by any endeavour to shew that they mistake the extent of the difference that subsists between our sentiments and theirs. This would, indeed, be dastardly, dishonest, puerile, and vain. It certainly does appear evident that the systems do oppose one another as to the proper object of religious worship, supreme love, adoration, gratitude, and praise; and each presents a different view of the character and government of God, the capacities, the duties, and the hopes of man. They are, in some great respects, different religions.

That our doctrines should be warmly and firmly opposed, is only what a sense of duty in Trinitarians naturally prompts to and demands. But surely it must appear rational and incumbent that we should give a mutual examination to the systems we respectively hold, especially as the points between us are of such acknowledgedly vast and unspeakable importance. What can be the foundation of a difference so very great as that upon which we stand? The question is one which the singularity of the circumstance naturally suggests; and sound reason can never scowl at that course of investigation which might lead to a satisfactory solution of it.

Christianity once appeared to Paul in the same light that Unitarianism does to many at this moment. Now, however, his prepossessions are gone, and the voice of prejudice is hushed. Now he is as fully convinced of Christianity's truth as he had been of its falsehood. What then can be more evident than this, that under certain states of mind truth may seem its antipode, and a confidence be manifested as to the correctness of perceptions that are really false? The mind, like the external eye, which must be in a healthful condition for the proper discharge of its functions, should be devoid of every thing that may tinge with an imaginary deceitful hue the objects subjected to its inspection.

And if, under the direction of sound reason, *you* are not determined as much as possible to divest yourselves of sectarian prejudgments and likings, in your attempts to discover real Christianity, you are certainly no lovers of truth, no friends to the interests of man, no regarders of Heaven's authority. Moreover, if you set out with a determination to receive nothing but what shall accord with your own present views of things, you are likely to receive no real good, and perhaps much harm. You may meet with that which contradicts your sentiments, and these sentiments may be on the side of truth. But if you have such a determination, though your creed may be right, your faith is wrong, especially if it lead you to uncharitableness to your opponents. On the other

hand, you may meet with that which contradicts your sentiments; you may reject it with abhorrence, and in doing so, you may think your heart very much established with grace so as not to be "carried away with every wind of doctrine;" and all may be but an indication of party spirit or proud conceit, and all may amount to nothing but "being wise in your own eyes."

From the period of the apostle's conversion till now that we find him addressed as in our text, the venom of malignity had been no doubt abundantly spit upon him. The diabolical monster, persecution, kept his maddened eye fixed upon Christianity's humble disciples, and his weapons whetted and unsheathed for their destruction. The Gentile scoffed and the Jew gnashed his teeth at the mention of Jesus' name. The outcry of imposture in Christianity, and of criminality of character in its espousers, made the world to ring. Some, however, it would appear, had thought that popular representation was not always correct; that the dogmatic charge of 'heresy' was no certain proof of error in those who were accused of it. Observation had probably taught them that a good cause and a bad name are very frequently companions, and wisely they concluded that the only rational method of ascertaining the nature and merits of the apostle's cause was to hear from himself the outlines and the evidences of his system: "We desire to hear of thee, &c."

"The rage for proselytism is indeed one of the curses of the world." Well-regulated zeal, however, for the propagation of truth is laudable; and every one who has a just and enlightened view of the character and will of God must esteem it an imperative duty to use his utmost exertions for the subversion of error, especially if the sentiments he opposes are of a kind naturally fitted to cloud the moral splendour of the attributes of the Deity; to produce ideas and feelings in the mind that sap the foundations of peace and happiness; or that have a direct or remote tendency to diminish in the soul the love of God, and consequently to annihilate from the mind the grand motives to virtue.

Now the tenets of the current theology, we do seriously consider to be very erroneous indeed, and we think they are not calculated to exert a happy influence over the mind. This opinion of ours does by no means involve us in what would unquestionably be an unjust and uncharitable judgment, viz. that Trinitarians in general are not men of as great moral worth and real piety as Unitarians. In proportion as pure and pious sentiments are blended with those of an opposite kind, the influence of the latter is happily subverted; and we cannot hesitate to say that in many respects the common theology does not absolutely exclude from its system the benevolence and the justice of the Deity, though we cannot at the same time but think that the manner in which these attributes are viewed divests them of much of their power of sweet attraction, and of much of their fitness to raise in the mind an elevated, sublime, and delightful piety. It is also true that doctrines are seldom fully pursued to their consequences, and the power of naturally good dispositions is not easily destroyed by foreign influence. Thus, notwithstanding the comparatively few instances of the manifested pernicious effect of the popular creed, it is our duty as Christians to endeavour to expose the corruptions that prevail, and "to contend earnestly for the faith that (we conceive) was once delivered unto the saints."

In the present day all honest attempts of a Unitarian to establish what he conceives to be scriptural truth are execrated with hate and fury; and, in fact, the language of some would lead a plain man, not aware of the madness of party spirit, to suppose that the grand aim of a Unitarian's exertions to disseminate his principles is the overthrow of all religion, and the subversion of the very foundation of virtue.

It is, however, by no means surprising that such treatment should be ours. It would indeed be more surprising if it were not. For when one has deeply imbibed any religious sentiment, belief in which he is made to conceive as necessary to salvation, so firm a hold does it take of his understanding, so completely associated and

embodied does it become with every other serious thought that passes in his mind, and such a peculiar direction does it give to his view of things, that he is naturally led to identify the rejection of his particular dogma with the abandonment of Christianity itself. He cannot express his pity, indignation, and astonishment, at the strange infatuation or wicked obstinacy of those who cannot see with his eyes, so as to appreciate the force of the arguments on which his sentiments are founded. This prepossession for his favourite dogma is such as to lead him to find it either in statement or by implication in passages of Scripture where others can find no trace of it, or where it is really contradicted, and in such portions of scripture, the creature of his ungoverned imagination, sober reason attempts in vain to destroy. Of course he thinks himself justified in charging his opponents with being perverters of Heaven's explicit word, perverse disputants of corrupt minds, contemning revelation with a fearless presumption and daring effrontery, and distinguished for every impious and detestable principle of action.

Be it, however, remembered by you, my Trinitarian brethren, that of the justness of such judgments you must one day answer at the bar of God. Accusations of a nature so serious should, you cannot but know, be brought forward with the utmost caution by one person or body of professing Christians against another; and the character and conduct of a party should never be pronounced from the supposed manifestation of unbecoming conduct in a few of those who compose it. It should never be forgotten that sectarian antipathies and zeal are apt to hurry one into furious, false, and unguarded declamation on very insignificant grounds, but which the operation of such principles magnifies to an enormous degree.

I trust you would not, Trinitarian Christians, in your zeal for purity of faith, wish to destroy or even impair those sentiments of piety and benevolence which are the chief objects of commendation in that system you defend, and to promote which is the grand end of Christianity. In contending for modes of faith, you would not wish

to lose goodness of heart and that warm benevolence without which, though you should give your body to be burned in defence of your creed, you are nothing. But is not charitable judgment of your opponents a most important branch of benevolence? We think, that innothing have Christians so widely departed from their religion, as in this particular. We read with astonishment and horror the history of the church; and sometimes when we look back on the fires of persecution, and the zeal of Christians in building up walls of separation, and in giving up one another to perdition, we feel as if we were reading the records of an infernal, rather than a heavenly kingdom. An enemy to our religion, if we asked to describe a Christian, would, with some show of reason, depict him as an idolater of his own distinguishing opinions, covered with badges of party, shutting his eyes on the virtues, and his ears on the arguments, of his opponents, arrogating all excellence to his own sect, and all saving power to his own creed; sheltering under the name of pious zeal the love of domination, the conceit of infallibility, and the spirit of intolerance, and trampling on men's rights, under the pretence of saving their souls.

We can hardly conceive of a plainer obligation on beings of our frail and fallible nature, who are instructed in the duty of candid judgment, than to abstain from condemning men of apparent conscientiousness and sincerity, who are chargeable with no crime but that of differing from us in the interpretation of the Scriptures, and differing too, on topics of great and acknowledged obscurity. We are astonished at the hardihood of those, who, with Christ's warnings sounding in their ears, take on them the responsibility of making creeds for his church, and cast out professors of virtuous lives for imagined errors—for the guilt of thinking for themselves. We know that zeal for truth is the cover of this usurpation of Christ's prerogative; but we think that zeal for truth, as it is called, is very suspicious, except in men, whose improvements in humility, mildness, and candour, give them a right to hope that their views are more just than those of their neighbours,

We are accustomed to think much of the difficulties attending religious inquiries; difficulties springing from the slow developement of our minds, from the power of early impressions, from the state of society, from human authority, from the general neglect of the reasoning powers, from the want of just principles of criticism, and of important helps in interpreting Scripture, and from various other causes. We find that on no subject have men, and even good men, engrafted so many strange conceits, wild theories, and fictions of fancy, as on religion; and remembering, as we do, that we ourselves are sharers of the common frailty, we dare not assume infallibility in the treatment of our fellow Christians, or encourage in common Christians, who have little time for investigation, the habit of denouncing and contemning other denominations, perhaps more enlightened and virtuous than their own. Charity, forbearance, a delight in the virtues of different sects, a backwardness to censure and condemn, these are virtues, which, however poorly practised by us, we admire and recommend; and we would rather join ourselves to the church in which they abound, than to any other communion, however elated with the belief of its own orthodoxy, however strict in guarding its creed, however burning with zeal against imagined error. * As you wish then to obtain the approbation of God, avoid yourselves and discourage in others all that approaches to malignant declamation. Be not among the number of those who speak much about what they know little or nothing, and who ignobly allow themselves to be carried along in the tide of current feeling. Be not of the number of those whose only acquirement is a few unconnected, vague, and flimsy notions of Christianity, which they have taken up without the least examination, because their fathers were content with them, or because they are current and held sacred by the people around. Judge not of the soundness and value of opinions from the countenance and support they generally receive. "Learn from the best example

* See Channing's Sermon preached at Baltimore, U. S., May, 1819.

and the highest authority, not to turn a deaf ear to reason, because the many call it heresy."

And, my Unitarian brethren, knowing that the interests of truth are patronized by the Ruler of the moral world, who can remove all obstructions to its progress and render all events subservient to its success, and more triumphant and glorious in their issues than human anticipation could have embraced; knowing that none can stop the career of honest investigation, or say, halt! to the march of intellect; convinced that the tyranny of man cannot confine the subtle essence of truth; that "truth is omnipotent, and will prevail;" let us rejoice in the prospect of that glorious era when superstition and error shall be expelled from our mental region; when truth shall assert her right to universal dominion, and sway a majestic sceptre over the mind of man; "when Jehovah shall be one, and his name one."

"The sophist may assail and the dogmatist browbeat, the interested may slander and the ignorant condemn;" but if the flame of serious, solemn inquiry be once well kindled, it will assuredly burn to ashes that fabric of mysticism which has been reared by "the learning of some ages, the ignorance of others, the superstition of weak and the craft of designing men." Meanwhile, "let us await the slow operation of time in extinguishing prejudices which time alone has produced, conscious that bodies of men are peculiarly tenacious of their habits of thinking, and that it is wisely ordained that the conquest achieved by just and enlightened principles should be firm and durable in proportion to the tardiness of its progress."

LECTURE II.

ON THE USE OF REASON IN RELIGION.

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1 THESSALONIANS v. 21.

Prove all things.

IT is obvious that in order to reason with an opponent there must be some common standard of appeal, according to which the course of mutual argumentation may be determined to be either true or false. Some Trinitarians have however denied that we are warranted in rejecting what appears to be absolutely absurd, provided it be communicated to the understanding by divine revelation. That whatever is revealed by God must be true, no rational mind can deny. But that God cannot propose to the belief of his reasonable creatures any thing that is not in consistency with their rational natures, is as undeniable as the other. So that, were it true that Christianity contained in it what is at variance with the conclusions of reason, reason would necessarily conclude Christianity to be false. Can you doubt this? Let me illustrate.

Why do you believe in the divine authority of the Christian religion? Why do you accede to its claims in preference to those of Mahomedanism, for example? You will immediately reply, that the evidence of the heavenly origin of the one is greater than that of the other; or that there is evidence for the former, while there is none whatever for the latter. But is not reason here our only judge? The proof is brought before its bar, and it pronounces sentence. Now the evidence of a religion is either external or internal; in support of Christianity there are both.

The external principally consists in miracles; the internal chiefly in the agreement of the facts that are stated with what are known, by other means of information, to have really happened; and in the consistency of its statements respecting duty and God, for instance, with what we know of these by natural religion.

Now in what manner do we ascertain the evidence afforded by miracles? The reality of these depends upon the testimony of the senses; but the proof they afford of the truth of the religion which they are produced to attest depends upon a deduction of the understanding, which concludes that God would not overrule or alter the course of nature in attestation of falsehood and imposture. In what manner do we appreciate the force of the evidence arising from the revelation itself? Clearly by a comparison of the statements made as to duty and to God with the universally acknowledged principles of piety and morality and the admitted perfections of the Deity. But since a revelation must be supported by evidence, of which alone reason can judge, and on the judgment formed by which depends our belief or disbelief, it is evident that if there were any thing in the two kinds of offered evidence which was contrary to our natural judgment, we could not embrace the religion. The very circumstance of evidence being offered to substantiate the claims of the religion supposes that we are capable of judging of it, and consequently that there are certain fixed principles of reason in us which our constitution forces us to judge by, and by which our judgment on the evidence must necessarily be determined.

The very veracity of God and the divine original of Christianity, then, are conclusions of reason, and must stand or fall with it. If revelation be at war with this faculty, it subverts itself; for the great question of its truth is left by God to be decided at the bar of reason. Did the former contain any thing contrary to the principles of our intelligence, in receiving it we should be doing violence to that reason which its evidences address, and to which they appeal as their judge; which, in fact, God has

given us for the very purpose of judging between right and wrong, truth and falsehood. Moreover, is not reason an emanation from the fountain of intelligence as well as revelation? Is not the former the voice of the Almighty within us, as is the latter his voice without us? The dictates of the former can never, therefore, oppose the doctrines of the latter; otherwise God would do violence to his own workmanship.

Suppose it possible, then, that miracles were performed to establish the divine authority of a religion that contradicted facts, first principles, and indisputable truths, we could not believe it. Because the evidence that miracles afford for the truth of a religion depends upon a deduction of the understanding, and could not therefore counterbalance the evidence arising against it from its opposition to the principles of the same understanding. It is worthy of remark, how nearly the bigot and the sceptic approach. Both would annihilate our confidence in our faculties; both would throw doubt and confusion over every truth. We honour revelation too highly to make it the antagonist of reason, or to believe that it calls us to renounce our highest powers.

The true inference from the almost endless errors which have darkened theology, is, not that we are to neglect and disparage our powers, but to exert them more patiently, circumspectly, and uprightly. The worst errors, after all, have sprung up in that church which proscribes reason, and demands from its members implicit faith. The most pernicious doctrines have been the growth of the darkest times, when the general credulity encouraged bad men and enthusiasts to broach their dreams and inventions, and to stifle the faint remonstrances of reason, by the menaces of everlasting perdition. Say what we may, God has given us a rational nature, and will call us to an account for it. We may let it sleep, but we do so at our peril. Revelation is addressed to us as rational beings—we may wish, in our sloth, that God had given us a system, demanding no labour of comparing, limiting, and inferring. But such a system would be at variance with the whole

character of a present state; and it is the part of wisdom to take revelation as it is given to us, and to interpret it by the help of the faculties which it every where supposes, and on which it is founded.

To the views now given, an objection is commonly urged from the character of God. We are told, that God being infinitely wiser than men, his discoveries will surpass human reason. In a revelation from such a teacher, we ought to expect propositions which we cannot reconcile with one another, and which may seem to contradict established truths; and it becomes us not to question or explain them away, but to believe and adore, and to submit our weak and carnal reason to the divine word. To this objection we have two short answers. We say, first, that it is impossible that a teacher of infinite wisdom should expose those whom he would teach, to infinite error. But if once we admit, that propositions which in their literal sense appear plainly repugnant to one another, or to any known truth, are still to be literally understood and received, what possible limit can we set to the belief of contradictions? What shelter have we from the wildest fanaticism, which can always quote passages, that, in their literal and apparent sense, give support to its extravagancies? How can the Protestant escape from transubstantiation, a doctrine most clearly taught us, if the prostration of reason, now contended for, be a duty? How can we ever hold fast the truth of revelation? for if one obvious contradiction be true, so may another, and the proposition, that Christianity is false, though involving inconsistency, may still be a verity. In fact, universal scepticism is the natural consequence of the prostration of understanding for which Trinitarians contend.

We answer again, that, if God be infinitely wise, he cannot sport with the understandings of his creatures. A wise teacher discovers his wisdom in adapting himself to the capacities of his pupils, not in perplexing them with what is unintelligible, not in distressing them with apparent contradiction, not in filling them with a sceptical distrust of their powers. An infinitely wise teacher, who

knows the precise extent of our minds, and the best method of enlightening them, will surpass all other instructors in bringing down truth to our apprehension, and in shewing its loveliness and harmony. We ought, indeed, to expect occasional obscurity in such a book as the Bible, which was written for past and future ages, as well as for the present. But God's wisdom is a pledge, that whatever is necessary for us, and necessary for salvation, is revealed too plainly to be mistaken, and too consistently to be questioned by a sound and upright mind. It is not the mark of wisdom to use an unintelligible phraseology to communicate what is above our capacities, to confuse and unsettle the intellect by appearances of contradiction. We honour our heavenly Teacher too much to ascribe to him such a revelation. A revelation is a gift of light; it cannot thicken and multiply our perplexities.*

I shall here produce an instance of the false illustration that has been employed with a view of shewing the propriety of believing doctrines that are seen to be absurd. Thus speaks Lord Bacon:—"As we are obliged to obey the divine law, though our will murmur at it; so we are obliged to believe the word of God, though our reason be shocked at it. For if we should believe only such things as are agreeable to our reason, we assent to the matter and not to the author, which is no more than we do to a suspected witness." Now the few remarks I have already made are surely sufficient to shew the fallacy of such views. The word of God *can contain nothing* that shocks our judgment; and the reason why we do not believe in contradictions is *not* because we have any doubt as to God's rectitude and veracity, but because we know that he cannot lay us under any obligation to believe what he himself has rendered it impossible for us to believe.

The grand difference between our obligation to obey the divine law, &c. and the supposed obligation we are under of believing contradictions, is this: To give obe-

* See Channing's Sermon preached at Baltimore, U. S., May, 1819.

dience to the divine law, we do see to be agreeable to reason, and God has established within us a principle of conscience, which irresistibly prompts to obedience. On the other hand, to believe contradictions, we see to be in opposition to reason. God has implanted within us a principle of intelligence, by the operation of which we are led to believe that he can never contradict himself, or, which is the same thing, can never give us a mental constitution, by the laws of which we are necessarily determined to believe some things as true and reject others as false, and then do violence to his own workmanship by requiring us to believe what he himself as our Maker has rendered us incapable of believing. We are able to obey the divine will, but we are not able to believe contradictions, and we cannot suppose that the Deity can act inconsistently. In the former case, we have from ourselves, within ourselves, and as a part of ourselves, the principle which dictates to us the propriety of doing our Maker's will. In the other case, we have from ourselves, within ourselves, and as a part of ourselves, the intuitive perception, that contradictions cannot be true. In the one case, we murmur at that which our reason and conscience should acquiesce in as right and becoming. In the other case, we are shocked at what our reason forces us to be shocked at—of the falsity of which we have irresistible intuitive evidence; and which we have also as much ground to reject, as we have to believe that God is consistent with himself.

Lord Bacon thus continues the passage I have quoted: "But the faith imputed to Abraham for righteousness consisted in a particular laughed at by Sarah, who in that respect was an image of the natural reason. And therefore the more absurd and incredible any divine mystery is, the greater honour we do to God in believing it, and so much the more noble the victory of faith." The object, you see, is to shew that we must believe what our nature necessarily teaches to be false; and to shew the propriety of this, he adduces as a parallel case that of Abraham giving credence to the express promise of God, that his

power should alter the course of nature so as that he should have a son. Was Abraham's believing, then, that God could alter the course of nature, which he himself established, and the stability of which depends on his own sovereign will, any thing like one's admitting that which his nature teaches him to be an absurdity, and precludes the possibility of his believing? Did the subject of his faith contradict any of the principles of his understanding, or that perception of truth and error with which the Almighty who made the promise endued him? The matter of his belief was indeed contrary to his own experience and observation, or, more properly speaking, he only *wanted* experience of that which he believed. But surely there is as wide a difference between giving credence to that of which one has not had experience, and believing what is opposed to the dictates of one's intellectual nature, as there is between believing that the course of nature, which indeed is only the agency of an intelligent being, may be changed, or that God cannot falsify his word, and becoming firmly persuaded of such a proposition as this being true: 'three and one are identical terms.'

And with respect to those who would seem to imply that a thing may contradict *our* reason and yet be true to the understandings of other intelligent beings, I would just observe, that, on this principle of reasoning, all things that we are convinced of may be false. As the Divine Being is true and immutable, in the nature of things it is impossible that any proposition within the compass of thought and evidence which God has rendered it necessary for us to esteem a contradiction can appear to other intelligent beings in any different light.

Again, whence originates the conclusion that we must believe contradictions? Certainly from reason. In admitting doctrines contrary to reason from the belief that God has revealed them, we are induced to do so by some kind of consideration which appears rational to the mind. The attempt to check ratiocination, or to destroy the authority of reason in matters of religion, can only be made by an effort of reason. Sentiments the most absurd, positions

the most extravagant, can only be reconciled to any mind because in some point of view it appears rational to admit them. The man who insists most strenuously on faith to the subversion of human reason, thinks that he enforces his injunction upon rational principles. He reasons against using reason—on the propriety and the duty of doing violence to that very judgment which he himself thus uses with the express purpose of shewing that we should admit what is necessarily repugnant to it. Thus does reason beguile and destroy itself.

I wish Trinitarians would have the candour to see how ill the charge of abusing reason comes from them. Their whole system is a system of reasoning and inference. It presumptuously attempts to scan the nature and the mode of existence of the Eternal Spirit. It analyses the Deity, as it were—it enters his very essence, pointing out the distinctions in it. The origin of it was the school of Plato, and the indications of its parentage are visible enough.

A learned defender of orthodoxy ‡ thus attempts to shew the propriety of defending Trinitarianism on the principles of reason and demonstration:—"It is observable that the fathers of the council of Nice brought all their arguments against the Arians from reason and demonstration, and almost never appealed to Scripture; but they were not acquainted with the inductive system, and therefore argued concretely not abstractly. This proves that in the purest times of the church, reason was applied to the subject in the best manner the reasoners could, and if it was so then, may it not be so now? Upon examination it will be found that almost every one of the arguments used by Athanasius against Arius is taken from reason applied to the subject, but scarcely one from Scripture. Those who deny that reason may be applied to the subject would do well to examine the arguments of the council of Nice as they appear in the Nicene Creed, and the arguments advanced by Athanasius as they appear in the Athanasian Creed

‡ Professor Kidd, of Aberdeen.

The reader will find the proof of all this in Cudworth. Indeed, till the subject be firmly established by reason and demonstration, those who deny it will never be satisfied nor silenced. Our efforts will be the more arduous to convince them, as many of those who deny the Trinity are most learned and profound disputants; so that nothing but the swords, the arrows, and the spears of truth, together with an impregnable coat of mail composed of reason and demonstration, can ward off their powerful and impetuous assaults."

About one hundred and fifty years ago, some of the most learned Trinitarians confessed that the doctrine of the Trinity was not founded on the Scriptures, but in the tradition of the church. The Unitarians were then obliged to maintain as a previous step to the establishment of their opinions, that the Scriptures are the only infallible rule by which to determine religious controversies. "The Socinians (said they) are of a contrary mind. Hath the Holy Spirit, that is, hath God said it? They will believe though all men and angels contradict it. They will always prefer the infinite wisdom of God before the fallible dictates of human or angelic reason."

The fact is, that the Trinity owes its birth not to any clear passages of Scripture, but to that wild spirit of speculation, and that fondness for what is dark and overwhelming, which, not content with simple truth, must have something to amaze and confound the human intellect. In Trinitarianism do we not see the brother of transubstantiation, that darling of Catholics, for the sake of which every thing was made to look like a contradiction, and none more so than the doctrine of the personal unity of God?

It was not long after the first promulgation of Christianity that men enlarged their creeds and confessions of faith, made more and more things explicitly necessary to be believed, and under pretence of explaining infallibly, imposed articles much more intricate to be understood than the Scripture itself, became horridly uncharitable in their censures, and the further they departed from the apostolic form of sound words, the more uncertain and

unintelligible their definitions grew. Their taste being characterized by the love of the marvellous and the mystical, they paid little regard to the plain and unerring dictates of inspiration, and by the exercise of a singular ingenuity under the influence of Platonic associations, they soon came to see their own illusions stamped with the sacred authority of Heaven. In their delight to astonish and amaze, they dimmed the moral glory of Christianity, made the gospel of Jesus like some of the incomprehensible systems of heathen philosophy—a religion unworthy of God to give or of man to receive. And now, my brethren, that we honestly wish to dismiss from Christianity every thing which has been foisted into it, we are accused of exalting reason above revelation. I wish the history of the church were better known.

LECTURE III.

TRINITARIANISM CONTRADICTORY TO REASON.

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1 Timothy ii. 5.

There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

Trinitarians do not deny that the unity of God is the doctrine of Scripture. They do deny, however, his *personal* unity, or that he is one intelligent being. They maintain that their sentiments are supported by positive assertions of Sacred Writ, and that the adoption of them is necessary to the salvation of mankind; and yet they themselves have engaged in the most violent disputes and entertained the most discordant opinions concerning the Trinity.

The Sabellians, whose doctrine received the sanction of the University of Oxford, maintain that in the Godhead there are not three distinct intelligent agents, but that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are only modes or relations of God to his creatures. Others who hold the subsistence of something different from unity in the Divine essence, yet maintain that it is impossible for us to comprehend what that something is. One thing they allow, that there cannot be absolutely *three distinct persons* in the Divine Being, taking these terms in any thing like their usual sense. Others with Bishop Burgess maintain, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are persons but not beings, while these three personal nonentities make one perfect being. Some will have it, that the three persons

of the Trinity are only *parts* of the Divine essence; while others, with Bishop Gastrell and Dr. Moysey, hold, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each individually includes the whole idea of God and something more, while all together they make up one complete God and nothing more.

Some will have it, that the Son and Holy Spirit are absolutely eternal, unoriginated beings, while Dr. Horsley and his followers affirm, that the Father produced the Son by contemplating his own perfections; and creeds declare that the former is begotten from the Father, and that the latter proceeds from both. Dr. Watts and Bishop Burnett hold, that the Son and Holy Spirit are created beings, and are Gods only by the indwelling of the Father's Godhead.

Without attempting to travel through all these metaphysical labyrinths, which would be a task as impracticable as it would be useless, I shall refer only to the real Trinitarian system as contained in the Athanasian Creed. Now this doctrine, we maintain, implies contradictions and absurdities. It involves one of four different conclusions. First, that there are more Gods than one; or, second, that three beings and one being are identical; third, that there can exist more than one infinite being; or, fourth, that none of the persons of the Trinity is infinite. With respect to the first it may be observed, that when it is affirmed that 'the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God,' the term 'God' used in the sentence must be understood in all its occurrences to express identically the same ideas. Here, then, in the most unequivocal manner it is stated that there are three Sovereigns of the universe, a doctrine which is directly inconsistent with the Christian system. Athanasius does indeed say that though each person in the Trinity is perfect God of himself, there is nevertheless but one God. But the assertion of Athanasius or any one else cannot alter the intuitive perceptions of the human mind; and nothing certainly can be more evident to any one who attaches meaning to words, than that both propositions

cannot be true, that they are necessarily destructive the one of the other. There is no possible method of escaping from this dilemma without being involved in the second monstrous conclusion, viz. that three and one are identical terms.

For though it be affirmed that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are not more than one God, but are only persons in the one divine essence; yet it must be evident, that, unless the word 'person' is used in some extraordinary sense, it follows from the statements of Trinitarians, that three persons constitute one person. A person, according to Locke and the apprehension of all mankind, is a thinking intelligent being, that can consider itself as itself. A divine person must consequently denote an intelligent being, possessed of all the attributes of Deity; and if the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are each a person, the mathematical absurdity is produced—of three intelligent existences being one intelligent existence.

Nor does either the third or the fourth conclusion less clearly and obviously flow from the statements of the Trinity given by its advocates. With respect to the former it may be observed, that if the Son, for example, be equal to the Father, he must separately and alone fill all space. Thus we have not only the absurdity that there is a plurality of infinities, but also that the same space is filled and occupied by three beings in all respects the same, and equal each to each; or else we are necessitated to adopt the latter mentioned conclusion, that neither of these persons or beings is omnipresent; that they are each circumscribed in their existence, and severally occupy their own separate and proper portion of the measureless immensity of space.

A consequence of the same absurd notion necessarily follows from the statements of the orthodox with respect to the power of God. We ascribe infinite power to the Deity, because the very reasons which prove that such a being must exist, demonstrate with equal force that he must possess inherently in his constitution energies of irresistible might, adequate to the production of every

possible effect. Now Trinitarianism, by affirming that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are each almighty, not only maintain the existence of what is unnecessary as well as impossible, but by affirming of the Father that he could not save his erring children from endless misery without the assistance of the Son to atone for their guilt—by affirming of the Son that he could not complete by his vicarious sacrifice the work of their salvation without the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost—and of the Holy Ghost, that his sanctifying influence could not have availed for the salvation of men without the interposition of the Son to turn aside by his meritorious death the vengeance-teeming hand of the incensed and inexorable Father—the conclusion is necessarily implied that there was something in the case of each of these persons which they could not do, something to which their powers were not competent. Neither of them, on this scheme, is almighty; and if the persons of the Trinity are not separately almighty, the Godhead which they form when united cannot be almighty; for it were absurd to suppose that one infinitely powerful being could be formed by three beings whose respective and separate powers are finite and limited.

Trinitarianism also involves the inconsistency of two persons besides the Father being infinite in existence, uncreated, and absolutely eternal, or else it derogates from the perfection and dignity of the Divine Being. And that it does the latter especially, Unitarians conceive to be very evident indeed. Every notion of God which in any way excludes the self-existence of his being, is defective, and withholds from him one of his highest and most distinguishing excellencies. Now the attribute of self-existence is indeed claimed for one of the persons of the Trinity, the Father; but it has generally been admitted by those whose notions have placed them highest on the scale of reputed orthodoxy that the Son is in some way indebted to the Father for his existence, it having been maintained by them in language wholly unintelligible to common minds and clearly self-contradictory, that he is *begotten* of the Father from

everlasting; whilst the Holy Ghost is said to have derived his being from the Father, or from the Father and the Son, having proceeded from both, according to the received creeds of the churches of the west. Now whatever sense is to be put upon the expressions *begotten* and *proceeding*, if the words in their theological application have a meaning at all analagous to that which in the ordinary use of them they are understood to convey, they must import a derivation of being. They necessarily annihilate the idea of self-existence so far as relates to the two persons who are said respectively to have been begotten and to have proceeded. For whatever the Athanasian Creed may say to the contrary as to 'none of the persons being afore or after the other,' the intuitive perception of every mind will repel the sophistry, and will recognise as incontrovertible the principle, that the being who is generated and the being who proceeds must be subsequent in the order of time to the being by whom the one is generated and from whom the other proceeds. The attribute of self-existence cannot then in the nature of things belong to the Son and the Holy Spirit. Consequently the Godhead of which these two persons, who are confessedly dependant and derived, are essential parts, cannot upon the Trinitarian hypothesis be as a whole self-existent. ||

Can you, my brethren, think it quite right to admit into your creed the notion of a begotten God; a derived infinite essence; the identity of a Father and a Son; the possibility of the former not preceding the latter in point of time, and not being superior in dignity to him; one producing a part of himself, or rather himself absolutely—becoming cause and effect too, and so the copy giving being to the original; a father being the son of himself, and a son the father of himself? Can you, I say, give credence to a system that so obviously involves consequences so extravagant and absurd? Such a system carries on its front the motto of Plato's philosophy; and

|| See "Objections to the Doctrine of the Trinity," by Thomas Rees, LL. D. F. A. S. *London*, 1823.

to those who prefer unintelligible and contradictory jargon to the simplicity of the Apostle's creed, I would only say, leave Unitarians to enjoy their own opinions without molestation, and excuse the weakness of their understandings, which not being able to attach distinct ideas to the terms of orthodox propositions, cannot consequently believe them.

The doctrine of the Trinity, observes a celebrated writer, confounds reason and prompts it to revolt. If there be any visible difficulties, they are those which are contained in that mystery, that three persons really distinct have one and the same essence, and that this essence being the same thing in each person, all the relations that distinguish them may be communicated without the communication of the relations which distinguish the persons. If human reason consults herself, she will rise up against these inconceivable statements; if she pretends to make use of her own light to penetrate them, it will furnish her with arms to overthrow them. Wherefore in order to believe them she ought to bind herself to stifle all her powers of investigation, and to depress and sink herself under the weight of spiritual authority. §

We now proceed to examine another branch of orthodoxy intimately connected with the Trinity, which is the hypostatic union of the second person of the Trinity with the man Christ Jesus. The opponents of anti-trinitarianism cannot deny that Jesus is frequently spoken of in Scripture as a man, and as distinct from and inferior to the Being who is usually spoken of under the name of 'God.' But they maintain also that the names and titles, the attributes, the works, and the worship of the Father are also given to the Son. Hence they are led to suppose that he was constituted of a nature both human and divine, which constitution of his person took place at his birth of the Virgin Mary, by his taking the manhood into the Godhead, or by his taking the human nature into union with his Deity.

§ Nicolle perpetuite de la soi, p. 118, Ed. 1666.

Now we maintain that the hypostatical union involves in it palpable contradictions. It necessarily supposes that the Deity was actually changed in the mode of his subsistence; thus destroying the Divine immutability. But as whatever principles militate against any of the acknowledged perfections of God, must be false, this must certainly be so.

The hypostatic union is directly inconsistent with the Divine immensity. For if the presence of God is infinite, if indeed there is no point of space in the universe where God is not, how, without contradiction, can it be supposed that he was really in unity of subsistence with the human soul of Jesus? The consequence that God was more especially present with Christ Jesus than with any other intelligence; that a universally extended being was confined within the boundaries of man's system of intellect; that the Deity was contracted, bounded, circumscribed, necessarily flows from the hypostatical union; and as thus destroying the immensity of God, we reject the doctrine.

Alas! that ever a system was formed which subverts the adorable attributes of the Godhead, while its professed object is to display them!—that the ingenuity of man ever employed itself in clouding the glory of infinite perfections, and with the view of magnifying them has stamped mutation on Jehovah's being, and struck out limits to his presence!

The hypostatic union is destructive of the spirituality of God. It holds out to us a being who is 'without body, parts, or passions,' becoming incarnate, uniting himself to and becoming one person with the man Christ Jesus. Even on these grounds alone, we should think ourselves warranted to reject the doctrine of the hypostatical union. There are, however, other considerations tending to shew the falsity of the doctrine, arising from its very nature; to these therefore we advert.

Now by the *nature* of a thing we mean its *qualities*. To say therefore that Christ possesses both a divine and a human nature, is to say that he possesses both the

qualities of God and the qualities of man; that the *same mind* consequently is both created and uncreated, both finite and infinite, both dependent and independent, both changeable and unchangeable, both mortal and immortal, both susceptible of pain and incapable of it, both able to do all things and not able, both acquainted with all things and not acquainted with them. Here is one of the persons of the Trinity united to the person of the man; here there is a person or mind both finite and infinite. Now, to use the words of another in expressing my own sentiments, if it be not certain that such a doctrine as this is false, there is no certainty on any subject. It is in vain to call it a mystery; it is an absurdity—it is an impossibility. According to my ideas of propriety and duty, by assenting to it I should culpably abuse those faculties of understanding which God has given me to distinguish between right and wrong, truth and error.

But the hypostatic union, not content with making one mind both human and divine, makes one person of two persons—the one infinite person of the Trinity and the person of the man Jesus strictly and literally only one subsistence; thus producing the absurdity, that finite may be identified with infinite. The only conceivable method of escaping the absurdity of the first, is to say that Christ's person consisted of more minds than one. This, however, Trinitarians themselves cannot admit. And the only method of removing the inconsistency of the other is to adopt the opinion of the Council of Chalcedon, which was rejected by that of Ephesus, viz. that Christ consisted of two persons. But neither will Trinitarians adopt this plan of averting the absurd consequences of this part of their system; and though they should, it would defeat the purpose which the doctrine of the hypostatic union is intended to answer, viz. to serve as a principle of interpretation of what they conceive to be apparently discordant passages of Scripture. How inconsistent are Trinitarians, not only with Scripture but with themselves. While the statements of their doctrine respecting the Trinity imply that three persons constitute but one nature, in the hy-

postatic union we find *two natures constituting but one person.*

And with respect to this most strange and confused hypothesis, I now proceed to remark, in the first place, that it is *invented.* It is not stated in any part of Scripture that in the one person of Christ there is a nature both human and divine, though from the difficulty, apparent contradiction, singularity, and importance of the doctrine, we should have expected clearness, precision, and repetition of statement respecting it. This wonderful key is not to be found in all the sacred premises. But did not 'the Word become flesh?' the Trinitarian will say. Not precisely *become* so, I reply; but according to the translation of *ginomai* in three of its occurrences in the first chapter of John, and according to the general translation of it in John's Gospel, the sentence should run, 'the Word *was* flesh.' Moreover, who is meant by the Word? I ask. Is it certain Christ is spoken of? Several eminent defenders of orthodoxy have themselves said not, and have understood the Word to mean, either the eternal reason of the Almighty, or the active commanding power of God displayed in its creating energy. And even though Jesus *is* meant by the Logos, I cannot see how the passage could prove even his pre-existence, far less his having united himself to the human nature or his having taken the manhood into the Godhead. First, because, as I have already noticed, '*was flesh*' is the most natural rendering of the original. Secondly, because whether *egeneto* be rendered 'was made or became,' the sentence would not convey more than is implied in the words of David when he says with respect to mankind in general, that '*man* was made a little lower than the angels;' or in the words of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who speaks of mankind as 'partakers of flesh and blood,' an expression which, like the assertion 'the Word became flesh,' seems to convey the notion of voluntary incarnation, but at the same time does not really express that idea.

And supposing the expression did prove Christ's having

voluntarily assumed a human body, and consequently his pre-existence; what then? Would this be a proof of his two natures? Not at all, but the reverse. For supposing *egeneto* to be properly rendered 'was made,' this would imply that he was not uncreated in the strictest sense. And whether the word be rendered 'was made' or 'became,' the clause would afford no ground for the idea of incarnation, which clearly signifies entering into the flesh, or being *in* it. The expression would affirm that he was flesh altogether; and if the clause translated either way be understood in the sense of having existed before as one substance, and having subsequently become or been made another, this would convey no other idea than that of transmutation, like that of water being made wine, or stones, bread; and not at all that of entering into and being in another unchanged, which is proper incarnation. And indeed the supposed assumption of the manhood into the Godhead is the reverse of the incarnation, which supposes the entering of the divine nature into the human, and remaining there incarnate. * The words of John give no support to either notion. Upon what weak and fanciful grounds does the whole superstructure of orthodoxy rest!

Let us now proceed to inquire how far the *invention* of a hypothesis as a key of interpretation to the Scriptures is consistent with the character of God as our teacher, and with the nature and design of a revelation. In the first place, then, I remark that the giving to mankind a book, which, like the secret despatches of a diplomatist, is full of enigma and obscurity, without the use of a key known only to those who are versed in the art of deciphering, is not in consonance with the veracity of God, because there being no formal intimation in the book itself that the use of the key is necessary to the right understanding of its meaning, the reader is led to suppose that the mode to be adopted in order to comprehend its statements is similar to that employed in the study of other books.

* See "Letters on Unitarianism," by *another* Barrister.

Thus at the very commencement of his inquiries and investigations, he is necessarily misled and deceived, and there is nothing that can present itself in his subsequent study of the volume to guide him aright and direct his course of examination; for the constitution of the book is different from that of any other, and he has no means of ascertaining this. There is no other book to the study of which we proceed upon the idea that we must find out its meaning by trying whether it will accord with this or that hypothesis. All that we think necessary is to understand the language in which it is written, and then to open it and read it. In the same manner we must enter upon the study of the New Testament, presuming, till some good reason is assigned for believing the contrary, that its principal doctrines lie upon its surface, and will be obvious to every unprejudiced reader.

The character of God as a teacher is further involved in giving us a book of such singularity, inasmuch as the book claims for itself the character of plainness and simplicity; it professes also to be a revelation, which implies the giving of light, and by its demanding faith in its contents, it naturally leads one to believe the practicability of at once understanding what those contents are. Thus the hypothesis of any subtle principle of interpretation being necessary, makes the Scripture belie itself and deceive those who read it.

The adopting of such a principle can never indeed lead to truth. It fills the mind with a theory which must prevent it from attaining the truth, should the truth be contrary to the theory. It must uniformly and as a matter of course bring the text to the system, and not the system to the text. It cannot say, what does the scripture state on this point or that—what the precise import of these terms—what the scope of this argument—what the object of this series of observation—what should I think if I had never heard of systems, this ism or that? But how can this passage be reconciled with the hypothesis—how may the key be introduced to move along the wards of this intricate lock without a touch of interruption? Thus it

places a hypothesis, previously assumed, above the revelation it affects to explain. Every man will necessarily be led in the choice of his hypothesis by his particular prejudice and likings. These will lead him to find his favourite dogmas where no trace of them exists.

Again, the necessity of a previously assumed hypothesis as a principle of interpreting Scripture is inconsistent with the goodness of God as our teacher. 1. Because truth must always be more conducive to happiness than error, from which, under the guidance of such a principle, we can never be guarded. 2. Because the examination of the Scripture by the guidance of such a principle must necessarily be attended with doubt and perplexity, and certainly freedom from these on a subject like religion, which concerns our present and future happiness, is essential to our peace and comfort. 3. Because, if according to Trinitarians the belief of certain articles be necessary to salvation, and this principle be essential to the right understanding of what those articles are, God has left our salvation at great hazard, we being placed in circumstances in which there are no certain means of arriving at essential truth. Finally, the supposition that the doctrines of Scripture can only be ascertained by the use of a particular hypothesis as a key of interpretation, is contrary to the very nature and design of revelation, which is a gift of light, and cannot, therefore, multiply our perplexities; which is intended to supersede the use of our judgments so far as the discovery of truths is concerned; which has for its object the making known of something; not the bewildering of the human mind.

I now proceed to remark, that, supposing the adoption of a previously assumed hypothesis as a principle of interpretation to be in certain cases in itself admissible, it can find no place with respect to the passages connected with the present subject that it is used to explain, because it is *unnecessary*. By appealing to the sources and rules of just criticism, the Unitarian is able to shew that the few passages which seem at variance with the obvious and prominent doctrines of Scripture are perfectly consistent

with them. Even with regard to the few passages the Trinitarian adduces to confound him, he only wishes to have them correctly translated from a correct text, and he receives even them in their obvious and simple meaning, which truly is widely different indeed from the case of Trinitarians. We maintain indeed that the greater number of those passages which they adduce as the foundation of their system are actually inconsistent with that system, and tend directly to support the contrary side of the question. Once more, we have seen that the hypothesis assumed, viz. the constitution of Christ's person by two distinct natures is absolutely *absurd*. Supposing then that there are some passages of Scripture that teach inconsistent doctrines, a thing we positively deny, how can they ever be reconciled by what is in itself irreconcilable? Can they be helped by a contradiction? Or for the purpose of reconciling a few scattered passages, which a just criticism can explain, must we *invent* a hypothesis inconceivably difficult and involving gross absurdity? Must we find our way out of a supposed labyrinth by a path that conducts us into mazes wholly inextricable?

Moreover, there arises this important question: Would the application of this singular hypothesis as a principle of interpretation, after all, answer its purpose, supposing it to be necessary and just, and in all respects admissible? I confidently say it would not. I found my assertion, in the first place, upon these plain principles. 1. That a *nature* is a mere abstraction, of which nothing active can be predicated. I have already said that by the nature of a thing we mean its qualities. To affirm then, for example, that when it is said of Christ that he prayed to his Heavenly Father, we are to understand that his human nature only supplicated Heaven, &c. is to speak downright nonsense, it being to say that the qualities of a being, instead of the being himself, did this or that. 2. That different and inconsistent things cannot be predicated of the same existence at the same time. For instance, we find Jesus asserting, that of the day and hour of final judgment no one knew, "no, not the angels in heaven,

neither the Son, but the Father." Now unless Jesus had actually two minds, which no one admits, how could he be acquainted with an event and ignorant of it at the same time? 3. The supposition of the divine nature is unnecessary, because it answered no purpose. We read, for example, that an angel strengthened Christ in the garden of Gethsemane. But had he possessed divinity in conjunction with humanity, such assistance would have been wholly unnecessary. 4. Because Christ is spoken of as inferior to and distinct from God, and as a man even when he is spoken of confessedly in his highest character, and in reference to what Trinitarians suppose to be applicable to his divine nature, or to his divine nature and his human together. Take, for example, one of the passages adduced, "of that day, &c." Here Jesus is spoken of in that character in which he ranked above the angels in heaven, which was certainly his highest, and also in the capacity of the Son of God, which is supposed to denote his divine nature, and yet he was not omniscient.

5. Because, granting his pre-existence, the passages understood to prove it plainly state or imply that before he had any human nature or sustained the office of mediator, he was distinct from and inferior to God. For instance, Jesus is usually understood to assert his pre-existence in these words of John xvii. 5. "Glorify me, &c." But we have only to consult ver. 22. in order to be convinced that supposing he had glory really before the world began, that glory was even then *given* him. The phrases "I came out from thee, I proceeded forth and came from God," and such like, supposing they prove the pre-existence of Christ, prove him also to have been in his pre-existent state an inferior being. The word 'God' is applied to one person. There being but one God, he who came out from the one God, cannot himself be that being to whom in the sentence the appellation 'God' is exclusively given. And to 'come out' from a place (for heaven is supposed) is not the act of a being who is every where equally present.

6. Because in those passages where he is spoken of as an inferior being, personal pronouns are used in relation to

him. Thus, "My Father is greater than *I*" implies that Christ is speaking of himself as a person. The pronoun *I* implies this. Now whether Christ had two natures or ten, he confessedly formed but *one person*. Therefore the assertion before us is this, that the Father is greater than the Son considered in his whole person.

7. Because the sense and connexion of many of the texts which state his inferiority, and the correlation of the propositions contained in them to others in which personality is confessedly implied, shew undeniably that Jesus is spoken of and considered as a whole person. Take, for example, 1 Cor. xv. "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father—then shall the Son also himself be subject to him who hath put all things under him, that God may be all in all." Here the Father meaning a person, the Son must be spoken of considered as a person also. Personal actions are attributed to him also. The term 'God' is restricted to one being in distinction from 'the Son *of* God,' and there being but one Jehovah, he who is afterwards spoken of cannot be God also.

And finally I remark, that although these considerations did not manifest the inutility of the assumed hypothesis as a principle of interpretation, nevertheless, it could serve no purpose, because to none of the grand branches of the evidence of Unitarianism can it possibly apply, as I shall soon have occasion to shew.

LECTURE IV.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS.

ISAIAH XXXV. 8.

The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.

BEFORE proceeding, my brethren, to prove the truth of our sentiments from Scripture, I shall suggest some general considerations, which I believe sufficient of themselves to shew the erroneousness of the orthodox system.

It is certainly rational to conclude that so stupendous and singularly important a doctrine as the Trinity should be clearly revealed in the book which alone can make it known. We shall then, in the first place, turn our attention to the five books of Moses, to see if the Deity of Christ is to be discovered there. The only declaration of Moses that appears to have reference to Cbrist is the following: "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me, &c." Does this predict the wonderful event of God taking on him the nature of man for our salvation? But had such an event been to happen, is it not highly reasonable to think that Moses would have been commissioned to foretell it? Was not his dispensation intended to usher in the more spiritual one of Christ? Was it not intended to prepare the church for the Messiah's appearance? And was it not typical in some measure of the glories of the age that was to come? Under what institute, then, could we have more rationally looked for some striking figurative displays of the glory of the God-man Messiah, or some express intimations of the supreme majesty of him to the bringing in of whose kingdom that dispensation was subservient?

Under the antediluvian age, the only promise given to mankind supposed to have relation to the redemption from the evils of the fall, is that which God uttered to Adam, "The seed of the woman, &c." But had the incarnation of Jehovah the Son been the intended means of accomplishing our salvation, is it not highly probable that God would have given some knowledge of it to our first parents? and yet who can say that in these words there is the slightest intimation of any thing of the kind?

Under the patriarchal age we find a similar deficiency of information on the subject. And is not all this exceedingly strange and unaccountable?

We advance then to the prophets, and here our wonder is raised very much. The most minute, and perhaps the only full and complete prophecy of Christ is in Isaiah liii. and do you find any thing of Christ's Godhead and compound nature there? Not at all. "*The man of sorrows*" is the only appellation given to him. The relation he was to sustain with regard to our salvation is distinctly and beautifully stated. But as, according to Trinitarians, he could have done nothing for us had he not been God as well as man, how can it be accounted for on any principle that on such an occasion as this, when the subject required the introduction of his Deity and his twofold nature, that the prophet should not even have alluded to these in the most distant manner, but have spoken of the Messiah's performing his part in the economy of grace under the exclusive character of *man?* As to the other prophets, it is not contended that there are above a few scattered passages to be found in them that have any reference to his divine nature. Those passages, we are firmly convinced, have not the meaning that Trinitarians attach to them, and several of the most learned Trinitarians, both at home and abroad, have candidly allowed this. Some of them, indeed, are at complete variance with the doctrine of Christ's Deity. To advert to this, however, belongs not to the present argument, which is founded merely on the confessedly few intimations that are given of the common theology.

Surely an event that held so prominent and special a place in the divine intentions, and to which all the three dispensations preceding Christianity were only preparatory, had it been known, would have been the frequent theme and most rapturous topic of Moses and the prophets. Is it at all consistent with the truth of the doctrine, that in all the prophetic strains confessedly almost nothing should be said on the incarnation of God Jehovah? Can we suppose it possible that this overwhelming wonder, Jehovah in human nature for the salvation of the world, the grand the only foundation of human hope for eternity, should not have inspired and have been the burden of their song, and that their faith in this inconceivably singular event should not have frequently burst forth in the effusions of wonder, love, and praise? Upon this we should have thought they would have with delight and ecstacy expatiated unceasingly—upon this expended all the language of loftiness and sublimity of which they were possessed. But no. On other subjects they do dwell in warm and animated strain, and upon the work and salvation of the Messiah they are not deficient in elevated and triumphant praise; but not once are their compositions inflamed with what, had they known of it, must have highly exalted them—the *Deity* of Jesus Christ. On this they are silent.

Go forward next to the New Testament, where all must be clear and effulgent. The Gospel of Matthew was for about thirty years after Christ the only one in existence. The writer must have intended it as an independent history of the doctrines of Jesus, and no other means of information on those subjects existed. And how many passages in it are thought to have any reference to the Deity of Christ? Only two, from which it is contended that it may be inferred, while it is directly opposed by the general tenor of the whole. Now here is a Gospel professing to contain a record of the principles of Christian faith—professing to teach the doctrines of Christianity; the Deity of Jesus is supposed to be the soul and substance, the very foundation stone of the Christian religion; and

yet what is the information we have on the subject? Suppose that a modern Trinitarian wrote a history of Christianity for the use of some heathen tribe who had no other means of knowing the truths of our religion, would he, think you, neglect stating the doctrines of the Trinity, the compound nature of Christ, and other points connected with them?

It is remarkable also that in the Gospel of Mark there is only one passage claimed by Trinitarians; and in that of Luke there are only two. Here, then, is a most singular case. Three of the Messiah's disciples write an account of the doctrines he taught respecting the terms of our acceptance with God—belief in the supreme divinity of Christ is the condition of salvation, and these Gospels are ushered into the world for the purpose of teaching men all that is necessary to be believed, each independently professing to give all saving knowledge; and yet it seems they contain confessedly nothing on the grand points of Christian doctrine, except a few incidental detached passages, from which the details of orthodoxy can be deduced. Is this not a plain and decisive proof that the Deity of Jesus was a doctrine totally unknown to the writers, and consequently that Jesus never taught any thing of the kind respecting himself? And since these Gospels were indited under the divine inspiration, how much stronger does the argument become. How should God have allowed them to neglect that very part of the teaching of Jesus which was of the greatest importance to all generations, for whom the books were designed?

Even in the Gospel of John, which was probably written to supply the deficiencies of the other Gospels, there are not avowedly above a few passages that Trinitarians can bring into their service. The sun of the Gospel firmament does not shine even here, though John wrote his Gospel to supply the light which the others failed to communicate. I shall hereafter shew that the few passages adduced in support of orthodoxy from that Gospel are not only insufficient to prove it, but that they are all reconcilable with the general tenor of Scripture, as it re-

lates to the sentiments maintained by us; that some of them may be brought with greater reason into the service of our cause, and are absolutely inconsistent with any other. I shall also shew not only that the general voice of Revelation supports Unitarianism, and that our doctrines are stated in the very terms; but also that in many different points of view the erroneousness of the current theology may be deduced, while in various classes of passages it is directly contradicted.

We next advert to the preaching of the Apostles, in which, if the Deity of Christ and the Trinity be doctrines of Christianity, we shall find them blazing forth in meridian splendour. Only examine, then, the sermon of Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, and those of Paul on various occasions. See Acts ii. 22—37. iii. 12—23. iv. 10. v. 29. x. 34—44. xiii. 32—42. xiv. 11—17. xvii. 22—32. xviii. 4—7. xxiv. 14—25. xxvi. 22—24. Now Peter and Paul must have known what Christianity was, and is there any thing in their discourses that has the smallest connexion with that popular faith which is now preached? Do the Trinitarian missionaries among the heathen preach in the manner Paul and Peter did? Are they content with stating simply that 'Jesus was a man sent to bless mankind by turning them from iniquity,' that he was raised from the dead as a pledge of our future life, and that he was appointed the judge of the world? Do they not press upon the attention of their auditors the doctrine of Christ's Godhead, his wonderful incarnation and the grand purposes of it? Do they not make these topics the beginning and the end of their sermons? Do they not dwell upon them with the most solemn and pathetic emotions? Do they not earnestly beseech the heathen tribes to acquiesce in the plan of salvation accomplished by the second person of the Trinity, and threaten them with damnation if they reject their Trinitarian dogmas? All this is a decisive proof that they believe their system to be true; and so, by parity of reason, Paul, Peter, and Philip's not having preached a system similar to theirs, is an equal proof that they had no knowledge and no belief

of such a system. The Apostles preached no God but the Father; and unless we suppose they were unfaithful to their trust, how can that be the Gospel which is commonly preached among us? This difficulty, no Trinitarian that I know of has ever attempted to solve, and I am confidently persuaded no one can.

Let us next look into the Gospel Epistles. The state of the case with respect to them is as follows. In the Epistles addressed to the Thessalonians and the Galatians, and in those of Philemon, James, and 2d Timothy, it is not pretended that there is a single passage that supports the orthodox opinions. And in the rest it is not contended that there are more than a few incidental scattered passages that countenance those doctrines. An obscure inference favours them in one Epistle, and a text or two are claimed for them in another, but nothing more. Among those Epistles, I of course include those addressed to the Romans and the Hebrews. The former is the only one that contains a methodical and systematic account of the principles of Christian faith; and in it how many texts are there that have been adduced as favourable to Trinitarianism? Merely two, and these wholly of an incidental occurrence. It is much the same in the Epistle to the Hebrews, though there, as the value and importance of Christ's death are dwelt on, we should naturally have expected that account of the economy of redemption in which, according to the current theology, the Deity of Christ enters as an essential article, and from which the value of his death is absurdly conceived to arise.

Suppose a Christian were writing an epistle to a heathen nation with the view of giving them a definite and comprehensive view of the Christian religion, would he just incidentally allude to its grand and essential doctrines? Would he not, on the contrary, give a distinct, precise, and perspicuous account of the person of Christ as constituted both of God and man? Would he not dwell on the incarnation? Would he not make this the foundation stone of all his spiritual structure? Would he not place it in various lights? Would he not expatiate at large on the

infinite condescension and glory of Immanuel, and endeavour by every possible means in his power to produce faith in the mysterious principles of his creed? That this is not the case in the New Testament Epistles, some of which are addressed to large bodies of Christians and dwell at great length on the doctrines Unitarians exclusively receive, which, if the orthodox system be correct, are of little importance compared with the others that are neglected, is to me a clear and indisputable proof that those doctrines were unknown to the Apostles.

There is one additional circumstance that of itself bears very strongly indeed against the truth of the orthodox opinions. It is the acknowledged want of a single passage in all Scripture together that *states* the doctrine of the Trinity, or the incarnation and compound nature of Christ. In no passage is it said that there are three equal infinite beings, each possessed of the attributes of Deity, and yet constituting one God. In no passage is it said that Jesus took the human nature into union with the divine, and that both made one person.

Now, that God would communicate to the world doctrines like these, so strange, so difficult, so incomprehensible, so apparently contradictory, and, at the same time, so unutterably important,—in a manner so indirect and obscure, so cold and unprotected, in such scantiness and seeming inconsistency of statement, in fine, in a manner so unbecoming the nature of the subject and its infinite moment, is so contrary to every idea we can form of what is fit, and reasonable, and proper, and so opposed to the best ideas we can form of the wisdom and goodness of the Author of revelation, that no one, I believe, who weighs the matter impartially can see any reason whatever to suppose that it could ever have been the will of God that we should receive the mysteries of orthodoxy as essential truths.

The Bible was intended to suit every diversity of intellectual capacity. Its truths were designed to come within the cognizance of the savage as well as of the sage, within the embrace of the uncultivated peasant's understanding

as well as the grasp of those who by habits of mental application and the energy of innate powers of intellect are able to understand subjects of depth and difficulty. The principle, you are aware, on which we found the present argument is this, that a doctrine of so much importance as the Trinity must be stated with great plainness and perspicuity, guarded with great care, and that it must be both with great frequency. The Trinity, then, to say less than could be said, is a most abstruse and most incomprehensible tenet. It confessedly baffles research, mocks investigation, and devours human thought. It bids defiance to the most strenuous efforts of the mightiest and most gigantic mind, ranking among the inscrutabilities of the universe, and in the highest class of the wonders of infinitude. It is allowed too that revelation is the only foundation upon which our faith in this mystery can be built. In proportion to its obscurity is the danger of mistaking it, and according to the measure in which this is the case should be the precision and the frequency with which it is made known.

The inconsistency of the claims of Trinitarians will appear much more striking, when we contrast the nature and extent of the alleged evidence for Trinitarianism with the manner in which those very doctrines are revealed, the acknowledged truth of which creates the difficulty of believing the others that Unitarians reject; which also are not only discoverable by the light of nature, and perfectly reasonable, simple, and obvious in themselves, but which it would be absurd to deny. Take, for instance, the existence and unity of God, the Deity of the Father, and the humanity and inferiority of Jesus Christ. The former are embraced by the understanding from the contemplation of the works and ways of God after the shortest course of the plainest reasoning, and the authority of the conclusions from the premises afforded in nature appears stamped before the eye of the mind with little less than the decision and incontrovertibleness of intuition. The premises are few and simple, the conclusion is evident.

The case is altogether different as it respects our means of ascertaining the truth and existence of the Trinity. Now in proportion to the number and the nature of the sources of information and the grounds of belief which we have for the being and unity of God, and which we have not for the peculiar constitution of Deity for which Trinitarians contend, should be the degree of plainness and commanding force and perspicuity which attends the revelation of each. To satisfy and convince us of the existence of the Great Original and of his unity, He himself has made a simple process of argumentation go on in our minds, which directly ends in the conclusion, that he is, and that he is one. By the operation of the principles of reason he has established in our mental constitution, we arrive at the belief of his existence and unity, and we cannot but rest in it with the utmost confidence and satisfaction; we clearly see that to adopt any other hypothesis than that to which we are thus led would be most irrational and inconsistent. Now the declaration of Scripture being the sole and exclusive authority upon which any one professes to found his belief of the Trinity, and it seeming to contradict not only the very nature of things, but what are acknowledged to be first principles of natural religion, and the plainest testimonies to the divine unity which are contained in the same sacred word, the case is altogether different as it respects it and the doctrines of orthodoxy.

The clearness and frequency, I repeat, with which the Bible states these respective doctrines must correspond to the nature and degree of evidence in support of each with which nature and reason furnish us. Now, we may learn the existence of a Supreme Intelligence and his unity by induction from the works of creation; from the data which observation and experience supply, we may arrive at the utmost satisfaction respecting his existence and unity. The proofs of these are easy and plain to the meanest capacity; we have demonstration of their truth independently of revelation, and to resist their authority is impossible; and yet he has been pleased to make them known by revelation in the most explicit and repeated

manner. How much more plainly and how much more frequently, then, must not be the statements of that doctrine which is so apparently contradictory and absurd, so mysterious and unfathomable, which has so much appearance of opposition to the doctrines of natural religion and the explicit annunciations of the Divine unity, and concerning which we have no other means of information or sources of knowledge than the Scriptures. Since the former are revealed to us in terms very clear and unequivocal, are we not reasonably led to conclude that God's intimations of his mode of subsistence in Trinity and Unity will be very much more clear, express, and frequent.

Is it not reasonable to expect that the New Testament would guard us against the danger of rejecting the Trinity? The doctrine looks like an absurdity to any mind. There is much in the very nature of it which bears with peculiar force against the probability of its being believed; it is but natural to reject it. The mind finds it altogether out of the sphere of comprehension, and opposed to all that comes within the bounds of possibility. Might we not then have expected that something should be said on the nature of it, and in defence of its consistency with reason; something calculated to shew us that it is not, as we suppose, a contradiction. Should we not have been frequently and solemnly warned of the impropriety of alleging its opposition to reason as a ground of objection to it? Should we not have had numerous reasons assigned to shew the folly and the inconsistency of such a conduct of the understanding? Should we not have been reminded of the weakness and futility of the human mind, and its total incompetency to judge of propositions connected in any way with the nature of the Infinite? Should not our anticipated objections have been met by the replication, that many difficulties and incomprehensibilities are contained in nature, and from this consideration should we not have been called upon to hush our doubts and to check our soarings? and would not the dangerous consequences of rejecting the Trinity have been pointed out in the most serious and solemn manner?

Further, let us take into view the nature of the doctrine of the Father's Deity with the intimations that are given of it by Christ, compared with the nature of the doctrine of the Deity of Jesus and the kind and degree of evidence upon which it is conceived to be founded. Now the bodily form of Jesus, his being subject to the feelings and sufferings of humanity, his mode of life, his habit of speaking of himself as a *man*, as a being distinct from God and wholly inferior to him, his various indications of a sense of dependance upon his Father, his attributing to him all his knowledge, authority, and powers, his ascribing to the Father the names and titles, the perfections, works, and worship of the Deity, must all have impressed the minds of the Jews with the notion that he was nothing else than what his usual declarations concerning himself clearly implied.

They believed in the exclusive Deity of the Father, and the language of Christ was in perfect unison with their ideas. Now, though the Deity of the Father, and Christ's humanity and his real inferiority to God, are doctrines which needed no confirmation, Christ nevertheless used language which would be certainly understood to state and imply the truth of these, how much more fitted should his language have been to convey to their minds the notion of his Deity also, of which they had never dreamed. Should not his language have been cast into the mould of this doctrine? Should not his intimations of his being God have at least been as frequent as are those respecting the Deity of the Father? 'God the Son' would have been as familiar a phrase with him and his apostles as 'God the Father;' the assertion of his necessary equality with Jehovah as frequent as are those which imply his subordination; and his claims to unity of essence with the Deity as numerous as those declarations which would seem to imply, in correspondence with the notions of the Jews, that God is personally one, and that he himself was of the nature of man. And in the New Testament in general should the ascription to him of the names and titles, the attributes, works, and worship of the true God have been

usual and express, as is the ascription of these to the Father.

The Jews could not conceive that two natures could constitute but one being; that one mind or person could be constituted of two minds, or that the same mind or person could possess both the qualities of man and the perfections of God. They knew nothing of the mysterious economy in which one divine person becomes the servant of another divine person, while at the same time these persons are equal in majesty; nor could they comprehend how these persons subsisting in equality could yet be one, supposing any thing in our Lord's discourses had given rise to such problems.

How much care, therefore, should have been taken to counteract the influence of his general language respecting himself, to explain the possibility of his being God as well as man, to obviate the objections and to ward off the danger of prejudice? But no indications do we find of any such concern having been shewn;—a clear and simple proof that he wished his language to be understood without modification, that he neither made himself God nor wished to be so regarded.

Christianity, it must be remembered, was planted and grew up amidst sharp-sighted enemies, who overlooked no objectionable part of the system, and who must have fastened with great earnestness on a doctrine involving such apparent contradictions as the Trinity. We cannot conceive an opinion against which the Jews, who prided themselves on their adherence to God's unity, would have raised an equal clamour. Now, how happens it, that in the apostolic writings, which relate so much to objections against Christianity and to the controversies which grew out of this religion, not *one word* is said, implying that objections were brought against the Gospel from the doctrine of the Trinity; not one word is uttered in its defence and explanation; not a word to rescue it from reproach and mistake? This argument has almost the force of demonstration. We are persuaded, that had three divine persons been announced by the first preachers of Chris-

tianity, all equal, and all infinite, one of whom was the very Jesus who had lately died on a cross, this peculiarity of Christianity would have almost absorbed every other, and the great labour of the apostles would have been to repel the continual assaults which it would have awakened. But the fact is, that not a whisper of objection to Christianity, on that account, reaches our ears from the apostolic age. In the epistles we see not a trace of controversy called forth by the Trinity. †

Further, it is allowed that during the life of Christ, his disciples were ignorant of his Deity, and it may be true as is contended, that, after the descent of the Holy Spirit upon them, their minds became enlightened with the knowledge of his character. But that no change of sentiment took place in them on this point, I think evident from the following general considerations. Supposing that they became believers in the Deity of their master, could the discovery of this most extraordinary fact beam upon their minds without an overwhelming amazement? When first the conviction of it entered their minds, must it not have absorbed all their faculties in astonishment and awe? When they came to discover that a being who had every appearance and property of a man; with whom they had always associated as such; whom they had seen hungry and athirst; whose weary steps, as he travelled from place to place on the business of benevolence, they had often accompanied; whose slumbers they had watched, and to the wants of whose nature they had often ministered; when they came to discover that this being was not what he appeared, and what they had hitherto supposed; that he was not a man, but the self-existent and immortal God,—what a moment must that have been! What amazement, what awe, must have seized them! With what sensations must they ever after have contemplated him! With what reverence must they have approached him! When in future they saw him kneeling down to pray; when they watched him wrapt

† See Dr. Channing's Sermon, &c.

in devotion,—how must they have looked one upon the other! How must that extraordinary situation, for that most extraordinary being, have impressed their minds! Is it possible that it should never have caused a single expression of surprise to escape them? Or that, when they were commissioned by this wonderful personage, to disclose these astonishing facts to the world, they should never speak of the error into which they at first fell; of the manner in which it was removed; of the sensations that overwhelmed them on the discovery of the stupendous truth; that, on the contrary, they should continue to speak to him, and of him, as if none of these things had ever happened; that they should represent him in all manner of situations but that one which must have been infinitely more memorable and interesting to them than any other, and should give him all manner of high and dignified appellations, but that one which is the most exalted of all, and the most descriptive of his nature? The term God-man, essential to the hypothesis that Jesus Christ possesses a human and divine nature, was invented as soon as the doctrine was conceived; but being altogether absent from the minds of the writers of the New Testament, the term which is descriptive of it is no where to be found in their records of his life and doctrine. ‡

On the supposition that the sentiments of the disciples underwent the change contended for, how strangely does their conduct appear when compared with that of Paul and Cornelius after they became converts to the belief of the Messiahship of Jesus. How minutely do they describe the particular circumstances which led to their conversion, and how unhesitatingly do they speak of their former sentiments and the revolution that their views had undergone!

Again, it is observable that Christ never corrected the notions of his disciples respecting his nature. Their erroneous conceptions concerning the doctrine of the resurrection, the nature of his kingdom, and the ends of his death, he distinctly noticed, and attempted to remove;

‡ See Dr. T. S. Smith's Appeal in behalf of Unitarian Christians.

but what were these things in importance compared with the knowledge of his Deity, which, according to Trinitarians, lies at the very foundation of all saving truth. His not having given the most distant hint of their being mistaken in their apprehensions respecting his person and dignity, is a clear and obvious proof that in regarding him as a man they did rightly.

Further, it is maintained by Protestants that the errors and corruptions of the Romish church, for instance, are foretold very particularly. But *our* faith, if wrong, must be a fundamental error,—not only bad, but fatal. And that no prediction of the rise of our sentiments under the character of error is to be found in the Old or New Testament, seems a proof that they are falsely regarded as erroneous or dangerous. There is, moreover, a prophecy of Scripture, which, we conceive, cannot have its due accomplishment till Unitarianism generally prevail, "And the Lord shall be King over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one."

Nothing, I think, can be plainer than that belief in Jesus as 'God the Son' is not stated as the condition of salvation. All that is necessary is faith in Christ as the *Messiah*. Thus, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." And the professed object of John in writing his Gospel is expressly stated to be "That men might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." ||

The doctrine of the Trinity is indeed from its nature impossible to be believed, and cannot therefore be a revelation from God. What we can form no conceptions of, we cannot, in the very nature of things, believe; where there are no ideas, there can be no such thing as belief. Faith is an act of the understanding, and must have intelligible propositions for its basis.

|| See Locke on this point in his work on Paul's Epistles.

LECTURE V.

THE PERSONAL UNITY OF GOD.

DEUTERONOMY VI. 4.

The Lord our God is one Lord.

ADOPTING the maxim which applies to all reasonings from effects to causes, viz. that no more causes ought to be acknowledged than are sufficient to account for the effects, we come to the conclusion, from the light of nature, that the universe was formed by one Supreme Power. Without entering into the details which would be necessary to make out this inference, I shall advance to the evidence of the unity of God which is to be found in Scripture. To reveal, establish, and propagate this tenet, to which, however sublime and rational, men have in all ages evinced a strong aversion, was the grand end proposed to be accomplished by the Hebrew prophets.

It would be endless to quote all the passages that might be adduced to prove the Divine unity; they are innumerable. The following are a specimen. "I am God, and there is no god with me," Deut. xxxii. 39. "To whom will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One," Isaiah xl. 25. "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me," Isaiah xlvi. 9. In these passages, as in every other in which the Almighty speaks of himself or is spoken of, his unity as one individual person is denoted by the use of *singular pronouns*. The word 'God,' which occurs in those passages, does not denote a collection of intelligent agents, but one existence in the natural and only intelligible sense of the word. And as those texts declare that there is no

other God than the Being who excludes all from that character but himself, Unitarianism is proved to be the doctrine of Scripture.

The Jews, who were made the depositaries of God's Word, and to whom he would certainly address himself in a language they could understand, could have no idea that by the appellation 'God' was meant three distinct persons subsisting in unity of essence, or that singular pronouns were used to denote a plurality of persons. How could they understand that God's unity was a quite different thing from the unity of other intelligent beings? What other idea than that of unity could have been attached to the current language which Jehovah used concerning himself without an express admonition? And where is that intimation to be found?

We find also that Jesus Christ himself speaks of Jehovah as one being, and affirms, in the language of the Old Testament, that there is no other than he. Now what effect was such language fitted to have upon the minds of the Jews, to whom he certainly wished to be intelligible? Could they imagine that the appellation 'God,' which he was constantly in the habit of applying to his Father in distinction from himself, was ever used by him to denote himself? Certainly not. By the appellation 'God,' he was universally understood to mean the *Father;* and yet he continually uses language similar to that we have quoted, in which we have seen it unequivocally affirmed that God is one being, and in which also all other beings are excluded from Deity in the very terms.

Thus, as when Jesus says "There is one God, and there is no other but he," or quotes any language of similar import from the Old Testament, the term 'God' must be understood to signify the Father; so the declaration of Christ in these words is a statement of the exclusive Deity of the Father. We cannot suppose that the meaning of the term 'God,' as used by Jesus, was different from that which it bears in the Old Testament. In the latter it cannot mean three persons in unity, while it is used by Jesus to signify the Father. Hence every passage in the

Old Testament in which it is declared that there is one God, or that God is one, is a decided proof of Unitarianism. And as the meaning of personal pronouns as used by Christ, when applied to the Father, and as employed in the Old Testament by Jehovah when speaking of himself, must also be the same; in every declaration of God in which singular pronouns are used by him there is a clear and pointed confirmation of our opinions. Thus again, as when Christ declares "There is one God, and none other but *he*," the pronoun *he*, being used in reference to the Father, denotes one individual being; so when it is said, "*I* am God, and there is none besides *me*—To whom will ye liken *me*, or shall *I* be equal, saith the Holy One;" the pronouns *I* and *me* imply that one being is spoken of.

Moreover, there are many passages of Scripture directly implying that it was the *Father*, and not the Son also, who uttered those declarations of the Old Testament that so clearly assert the exclusive Deity of the being who speaks. For instance, Christ declares, John viii. 54, "It is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God." The same conclusion may be drawn from Heb. i. 1, 2, where it is said, "God, who spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." For God, who spake to the fathers by the prophets, being the person who hath spoken to us by his Son, he cannot be the Son. † Since, then, the Father was the author of such passages as Deut. xxxii. 39. Isai. xl. 25. xlvi. 9. and our text, it necessarily follows that none but the Father is Jehovah. Indeed, this must appear evident from almost every passage in the Old Testament in which Jehovah is represented as speaking of himself or as being addressed by others.

With Trinitarians, however, all these forcible considerations are ineffectual, as long as they conceive their mysticism to be supported even by a single passage. Accordingly, in opposition to the tens of thousands of passages in which God is spoken of as one person, the language he is

† Dr. Macknight.

represented as having used when about to create man, is adduced as a proof that in the one essence of Deity there is a plurality of subsistences. Thus the passage runs:—"Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness," or more literally, "We will make man in our image."

The true explanation of this is to be found in the practice which has prevailed in all nations with which we are acquainted, of persons of majesty and power speaking of themselves in the plural number. "Given at our palace," "it is our pleasure," are common expressions of kings in their proclamations, &c. Thus Rehoboam speaks to the young men of whom he asked counsel, 1 Kings xii. 9. See also the letter of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, Ezra iv. 18. Christ also speaks of himself in the plural number, and Paul's common expressions respecting himself run in this style.

If, therefore, we consider how common throughout the world has been the use of plural pronouns to express the dignity and authority of the speaker, is it surprising that God should have used this language on an occasion or two, especially on one which was so eminently to display his moral and natural perfections as the creation of man. To this it has been objected, that were such language that of majesty, it would have been frequently used, and on such occasions as the promulgation of the law, in which Jehovah acted in the dignity of lawgiver. To this we answer, that this form of expression was purposely avoided in order to preserve the great doctrine of the unity of God as one person from the possibility of misapprehension; and we retort thus: Why, if the doctrine of the plurality of the Divine Being be truth, is the intimation of it confined to a passage or two, when the general strain of the Old Testament language so clearly seems in direct contradiction to it?

It is urged, however, that it is reasonable to suppose that the language, "We will make man in our image," was addressed to the same beings to whom Jehovah said on the fall of Adam, "Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." But this supposition is not

necessary, and cannot be shewn to be so. Further, there is this reason for understanding the one to have been addressed to beings distinct from God, and the other not: We know that inferior beings possess the knowledge of good and evil, whereas we have no evidence that God employed any assistants in the work of creation. On the contrary, his own declaration on the subject runs thus: "*I* am *he* that stretched forth the heavens alone, and that formed the earth by myself." And supposing this and similar passages did not prove the point, and that we maintained the language "Let us make man, &c." was addressed to angels, what could Trinitarians consistently urge against it? The notion of God's having created the world by means of instrumental agents is not contrary to reason. * The language would not imply more than that God endowed them with the power of fashioning matter into its present form, and that as his instruments he addressed them to call that power into exercise.

Moreover, it is said, "God made man in *his* image." Now, if the plural pronouns *us* and *our* indicate a plurality of persons in the Godhead, because they are plural, then *I* and *me* imply one person, because they are singular. To say the one relates to the Divine Being in his distinctions and the others considered in his unity, is to interpret according to the disputed principles of theology, taking for granted the thing to be proved. It is to take the pronouns *us* and *we* as implying plurality on an undisputed principle of grammar, but not to take the singular pronouns *I* and *me* as implying one person, though such is the meaning of them on the same principle also. It is to suppose that a plurality of persons may speak both in the singular and the plural, contrary to all usage, and to overlook the correct account that can be given of the use of plural pronouns by an individual.

It is further said, that by the plural *Elohim*, in the declaration of the tempter, "Ye shall be as gods," we are not to understand angels, but God himself; and that

* Dr. Paley.

the language, "Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil," and that uttered by the tempter being correlatives, we are to understand by the *Elohim* mentioned in the proposal of the serpentine seducer, the Deity in his distinction of plurality.

In opposition to this conclusion be it observed, that if *Elohim* means the Supreme God, and denotes a plurality of subsistences in the Godhead, it proves also a plurality of Gods, while the expression 'one of us,' understood in the Trinitarian sense, implies precisely the same. Unless angels are understood by *Elohim*, an appellation which is not unfrequently given them in the Old Testament and by which the Jews were accustomed to denominate them, it must be supposed that the object of ambition held up by the tempter to our parents was likeness to the Supreme. But could this have been that which overcame the virtue of our first parents? Could their judgment have been so perverted as to be led to suppose that they could become as the Supreme in any point of excellence? Would they not have considered such a thing as most impious and extravagant? And we may suppose that the tempter was too wise to use such unlikely means to accomplish his purpose as setting before them the prospect of obtaining so singular an object. We may rather suppose that the object of allurement was the prospect of arriving to the likeness of the next order of beings above themselves; and this was a much greater temptation than the other could have been.

Allowing that *Elohim* signifies God, and not angels, this would only suppose that the tempter had represented this knowledge as possessed by the Supreme, in order to give the more pompous view of its excellence, and by this means insinuating that, by the possession of it, Eve should become like him; or it might only suppose that the serpent had misrepresented it as knowledge peculiar to the Deity, in order to exaggerate its value in her estimation. Moreover, the correlation of the phrases we are considering is not quite evident, because the latter may be rendered,

"Behold, the man who was or hath been like one of us, now knowing good and evil."

It has been further objected that it is inconsistent with the majesty of God to include his creatures with himself, (speaking as if he had been only *primus inter pares)*, which, on the supposition that the words "Behold, &c." were addressed to angels, it follows that he did. This does not appear, I think; for the only common ground in which he includes them with himself is that of knowing good and evil, and the language does not exalt angels so much as the Trinitarian view of it exalts man. According to it the persons of the Trinity address one another in language which would seem to imply that man had become superior to all creatures, that the knowledge of good and evil had so elevated him in the scale of intelligence, that he could not be compared to any being but the Deity.

LECTURE VI.

THE FATHER THE ONLY TRUE GOD.

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1 Corinthians viii. 6.

To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

Without adverting to the occasion on which these words were written by the Apostle, I proceed to remark that the passage has always been esteemed by us an evident and decisive proof of the exclusive Deity of the Father. To make our argument plain to the meanest capacity, I shall adopt the simplest illustration of it imaginable.

Suppose, then, I should say to you, "To us Britons there is one king," would not my assertion distinctly imply that there was no other king of Britain but one? and if I should immediately afterwards mention some other personage, would it not be obvious that by that personage I did not mean the one British king of whom I had just spoken? Suppose again that I should say, "To us Britons there is one king, George the Fourth," would it not be implied in my language that there was no other king of Britain than he? and if I should immediately afterwards name some other official personage, would it not be clear that by that personage I did not mean the one king, George the Fourth? When the Apostle declares, therefore, that to us Christians there is one God, the Father, is it not as clear as sunbeam that he implies that the one Lord, Jesus Christ, is not God, and that there is no other God besides the Father?

The fourth verse thus concludes: "We know that there is none other God but one." Suppose again that I should address you thus: "There is no other king of Britain but one," and afterwards assert, "To us Britons there is one king, George the Fourth," would it not be evident that by the one king in the latter case, I meant the personage to whom I referred in the former? If then I should immediately afterwards begin to speak of some other person of dignity, would it not be obvious that the latter personage was not the one king besides whom I had said there was no other?

When the Apostle says, ver. 4, "There is none other God but one," and afterwards, ver. 6, "To us there is but one God, the Father," is it not incontestibly certain that he teaches the exclusive Deity of the Father. His speaking immediately afterwards of any other person could not therefore be understood as implying that that person was the one God, the Father, besides whom he had said there was no other.

But ingenuity has not been deficient in her exertions to shew the possibility of maintaining Christ's supreme divinity in consistency with this passage of Scripture; and it has actually been adduced as a proof of that doctrine. Thus the argument runs: "When the Apostle says, ver. 5, 'Though there be that are called gods, as there be gods many, and lords many,' it is obvious that 'the gods many and lords many' are both included in the more general and comprehensive phrase 'gods many.' The same supposed beings which he first calls by the simple appellation 'gods,' he distributes under the appellations 'gods and lords.' The 'lords many,' then, belonged to the number of the heathen deities as well as the 'gods many,' and as the Apostle's object was to shew that the Deity should receive supreme homage and worship, and to the gods many and lords many of the heathen, he opposes not merely God the Father, but the one Lord Jesus Christ, therefore the one Lord Jesus Christ is God as well as the Father, and is entitled to the worship belonging to Deity."

This is plausible at first sight, but it is certainly nothing more. Supposing that the Apostle, in distributing the gods into two classes, had designated each by an appellation which, though peculiar to itself, was not in one instance more descriptive of Deity than in the other, we might have been led to understand that both the classes of distribution ranked in the heathen mythology as divine beings or gods. But when in his supposed distribution of 'gods' into two distinct classes, he confines to one of these classes the appellation that he had given to the one general class, it clearly appears that there was no distribution in the case, and consequently that those alone ranked in the order of proper heathen deities, to whom he exclusively gives the name of 'gods.' His confining the general appellation 'gods' in his subsequent specification to one class of beings shews that by that class he meant exclusively those whom he had mentioned under the same name.

And is not the very circumstance of the Apostle's speaking of the gods and lords under the specific names by which they had been known, a clear and obvious proof that he spoke of them in the capacities which they were understood respectively to hold? Now we are informed by Hesiod, Plato, Plutarch, and other heathen authors, that their gods were superior to their lords. "The gods were their celestial and sovereign deities; the lords were the deified souls of worthy men, their Baalims and presidents of earthly things, their agents and mediators between the sovereign gods and men." †

The parallel the Apostle draws between the lords of the heathen and the one Lord Jesus Christ, requires us to understand, therefore, that the latter is *perfectly distinct* in nature and personality from the one God, and wholly inferior to him; that he is the agent and mediator of God the Father.

Accordingly the capacity sustained by them in the Christian dispensation is denoted by the respective application of prepositions which have different meanings.

† Dr. Samuel Clarke.

"One God, the Father, *of* whom are all things, and we *for* him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, *through* whom are all things, and we *through* him." All this is simple when the Father and the one Lord are considered according to the relative dignity and offices of the gods and the lords of the heathen. And nothing can be plainer than that *dia* universally signifies instrumentality of operation, while the prepositions applied to the Father denote original power and agency in the matter with respect to which they are used. In the application of these different prepositions, we see a clear and precise distinction made between the one God and the one Lord, such a distinction as the parallel of the Apostle exactly required, and such a distinction as cannot be made to comport with the idea that the Father and Christ are considered as of the same dignity and dominion.

It is therefore wholly unfounded to say that the proposition, "There is none other God but one," must be considered as identified in the reasoning of the Apostle with the simple proposition, "To us there is but one God, the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ." And even supposing that under the general term 'gods' he includes the 'lords' of the heathen, might not the Apostle be supposed to have done so, merely because in the language of the heathen they could be called or were actually called so in an inferior sense. But the parallel he draws between the 'gods many and lords many,' considered in their relative dignity, (which was that of inferiority in the lords and superiority in the gods), and the one God and the one Lord Jesus Christ, as well as the prepositions used to denote their respective capacities in the heathen institute and the subsequent distinction of them by the appellations that were respectively given to them by the heathen to distinguish the one class or rank from the other, all decidedly shew that the Apostle spoke of the one God the Father as the only supreme God.

He may have mentioned the 'gods' first and generally, because it was his principal object to shew that there was only *one God* to Christians. This being his main object,

the parallel between the gods many of the heathen and the one God would naturally enough come forth first in his statement. Or he may have mentioned the 'gods many' in the first place, because being supreme, they would first strike his mind, or because the 'lords' would be understood from the mention of the gods, every god having had a lord as his mediator and agent.

It is further objected, that Christ being *the* Lord, if we do not allow his lordship or dominion to be one with that of the Father, we have more than one Lord. But this is merely assuming the point in dispute. The whole parallel and the application of the preposition *dia,* with respect to Christ, make it certain that though he is indeed *the Lord,* yet he is the one *subordinate* Lord. And the objection might be thus retorted: Since the lordship of the Father is confessedly absolute, if the dominion of Christ be the same, we have certainly two absolute Lords.

Some of the ancient fathers argued, that as the Apostle by saying, 'there is one Lord,' cannot be reasonably supposed to exclude the Father from being also the Lord of Christians; so neither, by saying, 'there is one God, the Father,' ought he to be supposed to exclude Jesus Christ from being also the God of Christians. But this either takes for granted the thing to be proved; or else proceeds on the principle which one would adopt were he to say, the king is not excluded from the dominion and authority of the mayor; therefore the mayor's authority and power are equal to those of the sovereign.

The exclusive Deity of the Father appears therefore to be proved from this passage in the most clear and distinct manner; and we look not in vain for passages fully as explicit and determinate on the point. Let us advert to Ephes. iv. 4—6, "There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Now, as when it is said, 'there is one faith and one baptism,' it is implied that the one faith is not the one baptism, nor the one baptism the one faith; so when it is said, 'there is one Lord,' and afterwards, 'one God and Father of all,' it is as distinctly

implied that the one Lord is not the one God of all, nor the one God the one Lord. They are as perfectly distinct as words can convey distinct ideas. The appellation 'God' is given to one person, and there being but one God on any scheme, the Father must alone be he.

Moreover, is it not very plain indeed, that among those respecting whom it is said, 'the Father is above,' the one Lord is included? And is this any thing more or less than that which the common phraseology of the New Testament justifies, which speaks of God as "*the God and Father of Jesus Christ our Lord;* a phrase clearly implying that in the same sense of superiority, (and not with relation to any incomprehensible mode of eternal generation), Jehovah is called the Father of Jesus in which he is called his God; an assertion that cannot be made plainer than by our Lord's declaration to Mary, before his ascension, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Indeed, when we attempt to prove the FATHER to be the only God, we have in the very name by which he is designated what marks and brands with the name of invention all the metaphysical conceits of 'begotten, not made,' 'being of one substance with the Father, &c.' and at once determines the absolute superiority of the God of Jesus.

But as I wish to prove rather than to declaim, I shall leave the picture to the admiration of those who love what is most mysterious and contradictory, and go on to observe that we have a clear and distinct declaration of the exclusive Godhead of the Father in the introduction to Christ's intercessory prayer, which runs thus: "This is life eternal to know thee the only true God, and Jesus to be the Christ, whom thou hast sent." It has indeed been said that he is here denominated '*the only true God*' in distinction from all false gods—to the exclusion of those "whom the false persuasion of the Gentiles had introduced." But this is a mere supposition, to evade a plain and disagreeable consequence. Besides, the evasion will not prove effectual; for in the very same sentence in which Jesus states the glorious advantage that would attend faith in his mission, the

only character in which he represents it as necessary that he should be known is that of the Christ, a capacity that distinguishes him from the Being whose Christ he is, and a capacity which Jehovah can never be supposed to hold, whether considered as forming part of the whole person of Jesus or as considered abstractly, which, however, we have seen, cannot be the case, since a nature cannot be said to hold any office or do any action whatever.

Indeed, though the possibility of God's sustaining such an office of inferiority could not be controverted on any ground, still as it is held by Trinitarians, that to possess the divine as well as the human nature is necessary for the Christ in order to the discharge of the part he has to act in the economy of salvation, we may ask, why is not belief in the divine part of his constitution represented as necessary to salvation? As the Christ it is supposed that he is God and man; why then are not both these particulars specified as the subjects of faith in a summary, as this is, of those articles the belief of which is necessary to human salvation. Moreover, Jesus in this passage addresses the Father in prayer; so that unless we are prepared to admit that the character of the true God may be ascribed to more than one being, and that *one* person may address another and yet not be a totally distinct person, we must acknowledge the strength of the passage in favour of the doctrine that it would certainly convey to a mind unacquainted with orthodoxy. Nothing can be plainer than that the distinction here made by the word 'only' is between Jesus as the messenger of God, and God who sent him; and at the very least it may be said, that whether or not the word 'only' had reference to the heathen deities, it tacitly and effectually excludes Jesus himself from the rank of the Sovereign of the world.

The only passage in which it is supposed to be affirmed that the appellation 'true God' is applied to Jesus, is 1 John v. 20. But, in the first place, supposing that the sense of the passage shewed Jesus Christ to be the immediate antecedent, we might understand that the pronoun *this* or *he* referred to the remote antecedent in the same

manner as in 2 John 7, especially as they both occur in the same author. 2. The sense of the passage leads us to understand God to be the proper antecedent; for as the first occurrence of the phrase 'him that is true' certainly refers to God the Father, so, according to the structure of the words, the second occurrence of it must also refer to him. 3. To suppose that the first occurrence of it refers to God, which no one can deny, and that the second refers to Christ, is to make the Apostle affirm that the Son of God has given us an understanding to know him that is true (or God), and then to apply the same phrase to Jesus, who came to give us an understanding to know the being whom he had distinguished and described as "him that is true."

The ambiguity arising from the use of the word 'even' has no foundation; for it is not in the original, and the preposition that follows may be understood in the sense of 'through,' which indeed it might equally well be rendered. Dr. Clarke understood the pronoun 'this' to refer to the knowledge of the true God communicated by the Son. "This knowledge is the knowledge of the true God and of eternal life."

And indeed, supposing Jesus to be the subject of the last sentence for another reason than those already assigned, the passage would not prove that he is called the true God; for as when it is said, "he is the eternal life," the meaning is only that he is the way to, or the way to the knowledge of, eternal life; so when it is said that Jesus is the true God, the meaning could only be, that he is the way to, or the way to the knowledge of, the true God. This is a sentiment in exact accordance with all those Scriptures that represent Christ only as the medium by which we arrive at the knowledge and enjoyment of eternal life. Such as, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." "God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in or through his Son." "Eternal life is the gift of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The exclusive Deity of the Father is also stated in the very terms in the following passages; "They sing the

song of Moses and of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy," Rev. xv. 3, 4. "The only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ," Jude 4. "To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty," Jude 25. Many copiés read "through Jesus Christ," and the term God is restricted to the Father in the former verse. "To the only wise God, be glory through Jesus Christ," Rom. xvi. 27. "But of that day, and that hour, knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father," Mark xiii. 32.

It has been observed with respect to the last passage, that no one can deny that ignorance of the minutest part of the plan of providence is as inconsistent with the nature of the Deity as ignorance of the whole; and that he could not be God to whom every atom in the boundless immensity of space, and every moment in the endless duration of eternity, are not perfectly known. They who maintain that Jesus Christ is Supreme God, must surely mean, if words have meaning, that in his mind were concentrated all the infinite attributes of Deity. But what can more directly and clearly refute this supposition than our Saviour's express declaration, that there were, in the eternal counsels of the Father, a day and an hour that he knew not, or that were in fact hidden from him? Can we suppose for a moment that he who made this open declaration either regarded himself as the omniscient God, or wished to be so regarded?

I am well aware, however, that the maintainers of the doctrine in question have made an attempt, no doubt from the best and purest motives, to give this passage an interpretation corresponding with their general views. This attempt we are now to examine.

It is said that when our blessed Lord imputes to himself imperfection, or any thing that implies it, we are to regard him as speaking, not of his divine, but of his human nature. As a human being, they say, he was ignorant of many

things, though as God he was omniscient. Jesus Christ, the man, might not know what Jesus Christ, the second person of the Godhead, did. The remarks respecting the doctrine of the two natures of Christ, considered in itself and as a principle of interpretation, are, in my opinion, more than sufficient to shew the utter groundlessness, inconsistency, and absurdity of any interpretation of any part of Scripture, upon the foundation of that doctrine. But the following remarks of an admirable writer * are so very pertinent to the subject, and so clearly stated, that I cannot help quoting them.

"Are we to understand that the divine and human nature, in the person of our Saviour, were perfectly distinct,—so much so that there were subjects on which they held no communication, and were variously informed? Are we to understand that those same organs of speech, of which the divine nature made use at one time, to proclaim its omniscience, were employed by the human nature at another, to declare the imperfection of its knowledge? Are we to understand, in short, that two different beings, a perfect and an imperfect, a finite and an infinite, occupied the same body; and spoke and acted, at different times, in a different and inconsistent manner? Is this the doctrine which we are required to receive as the doctrine of Scripture?—and must we, at the same time, believe that these natures, thus distinct and unconnected both in word and deed, were nevertheless so perfectly united as to form one indivisible person, one perfect deified man? Surely an opinion so monstrous, so made up of direct contradictions, cannot have the sanction of the Word of Truth. If the *mind* of Jesus was *one*, and this is not disputed, it could not, at the same time, have been informed and uninformed upon the same subject;—the same idea could not, at the same moment, have been present to and absent from it.

"Our Lord's assertion is, that he *knew not* the day and hour. Shall we then suppose him to mean, that though

* Dr. Joseph Hutton, in his Sermon entitled "Omniscience the Attribute of the Father only."

he did know it *as* the Deity, he did not know it *as* man; or, in other words, that the particular portion of his nature which was human was not the source of his knowledge? What is this but to ascribe to our blessed master words which, if explained by him, would have been found to contain nothing better, even upon the Trinitarian hypothesis, than a flat and unprofitable truism; and which, unexplained, could be regarded in no other light than as a mere equivocation. Let it be remembered, as a fair and legitimate, though I must think it will appear a startling consequence of this mode of interpretation,—that our Lord might, consistently with his character and with truth, have denied in one place, in terms as strong and direct as he affirmed in another,—saying *I know*, one moment, and *I know not*, as confidently, the next,—his knowledge of the human heart, of the circumstances of his own approaching death, of the destruction of Jerusalem, of the general resurrection and judgment, in short, of every thing which, as a mere man, he could not have known. Those whose minds revolt against such a theory and such a consequence, and who would not put an equivocation into the mouth of him who was "the truth," as well as "the way and the life," will probably agree with me, that Jesus would not have professed himself ignorant of that which he really knew, in any character or nature whatsoever, whether human or divine."

LECTURE VII.

THE FATHER THE EXCLUSIVE OBJECT OF WORSHIP.

JOHN XVI. 23.

In that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.

WORSHIP constituting the most solemn service we can render to the Great Creator and Governor of the world, and Christianity professing to teach us all that concerns our duty towards him, the rule by which we should direct our homage must be laid down very explicitly indeed, and so we find it to be. The text, the very text, my brethren, proves that our sentiments as Unitarians with respect to the proper object of religious worship are correct—wholly and undeniably correct. Let orthodox ingenuity be called into exercise, as it frequently is on other points, and what can it do to overthrow the firm foundation on which our principles rest? Speaking of the day in which he was to ascend to heaven, Jesus in the most express terms declares to his disciples, "In that day ye shall ask me nothing; whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." We regulate our worship according to this rule. We are therefore right, and of course the multitude must be wrong in worshiping him who thus to his disciples declares that when removed from the sphere of sensible communication, they should ask him nothing. Where is there an express command to worship Jesus, as there is here an injunction not to worship him?

But this is not all. Who are declared by Jesus to be the true worshipers? Hear his own explicit words: "The true worshipers shall worship the FATHER in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him." Were there no other passage in the whole Bible, which authorizes the Unitarians to restrict their worship to the Father only, this would be abundantly sufficient. It most authoritatively and solemnly commands them, if they would be considered true worshipers, to pay their adoration to no other person or being. By what fatality does it happen, that serious and inquiring Christians never think of this passage; or if they do think of it, by what means do they evade its force? What sense do they affix to it? If those are the true worshipers who worship the Father, how can they be so who worship two other beings besides the Father? Those who worship 'the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, three persons in one God,' are never in the Scriptures said to be the true worshipers. Those who worship the Father only are. The worshiper of one God, in one person, has, therefore, the express and solemn declaration of Jesus Christ, that he is the true worshiper. All other persons whatsoever are destitute of this high and decisive authority!

But there are many other passages equally striking and authoritative that bear directly upon this subject. Such is the Lord's prayer itself, given by Jesus Christ for the very purpose of teaching his disciples how to pray. The occasion to which we owe this model of authorized and acceptable worship, is so peculiar, and makes so directly in favour of the worshiper of one God in one person, that had he had the framing of circumstances which should for ever decide the matter as he wished it, by the highest authority, and in the most perfect manner, it is impossible to conceive how he could have caused any others to happen, which would have been so conclusive. The disciples of our Lord, as if apprehensive that they might not have been in the habit of praying aright, or, believing that their divine Master might pour some fresh light upon their minds; or, convinced that he would graciously remove

their errors if they were wrong, and establish them in the truth if they were right, with humility and earnestness, asked his counsel and direction. They appear, too, to have been deeply and solemnly impressed with his own manner of addressing the universal Parent; and they were convinced that no one was so well qualified to instruct them in the proper performance of this most important duty. "And it came to pass, (says the sacred historian), that as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of the disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples; and he said unto them, When ye pray, say, OUR FATHER which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, for THINE is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever, Amen."

Now, I not only say that Christians have a right to regulate their worship according to this perfect pattern of prayer, but I affirm that it is their solemn and indispensable duty to do so. If ever the commands of Jesus Christ were authoritative; if ever his directions were complete, they must be conceived to be so in this instance;—for it regards an act the most important upon which he could convey instruction, and the most intimately connected with the great object of his mission. If, however, the general practice of Christians in the present day be right, this example of prayer, instead of being a perfect pattern of it, is exceedingly defective. It directs the mind to one object, one person, one being alone; and to this one object, person, or being, it gives the name of FATHER. This, therefore, was a most direct and complete confirmation of the great peculiarity of the Unitarian doctrine.

It was a most direct and complete confirmation of the general practice of our Lord's disciples, who, in common with all Jews, were in the habit of praying to one God in one person; for that the Jews were acquainted with the doctrine of the Trinity, and that they paid their adorations to a Triune God, no one pretends to believe, this doctrine being always spoken of as one of the peculiarities of the Christian system.

Here, then, are a number of persons, who had always

been in the habit of praying to one God in one person, assembled around a Being who was come into the world on purpose to instruct them in every thing that concerns the Deity. According to the common notion, they had been in the habit of believing a great error, and of acting exceedingly wrong; for, if it be proper to worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, three equal persons in one undivided essence,—the worship of one of these persons, of the Father only, must be a great error. With the earnestness of sincerity, they beseech their divine instructor to open their minds to the perception of the truth; and, indeed, to enlighten them on this very subject was one great object of his coming into the world. What then does he do in answer to their request? Does he avail himself of this opportunity to remove their error? Does he tell them that they have done well to ask him, for that they have all along been addressing their adorations not to the proper object of worship, but to only a part of that object? Does he say, "You have been in the habit of praying to the Father only. This is wrong, for there are three equal persons in the Godhead, who demand alike the homage of your hearts. There are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; it is your duty to worship each." Does he command them, when ye pray, say,—"O God the Father of Heaven, have mercy upon us—O God the Son, redeemer of the world, have mercy upon us—O God the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, have mercy upon us—O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three Persons and one God, have mercy upon us." Does he enjoin them to urge their petitions by such pleas as the following? "By the mystery of thy holy incarnation; by thy holy nativity and circumcision; by thy baptism, fasting, and temptation; by thine agony and bloody sweat; by thy cross and passion; by thy precious death and burial; by thy glorious resurrection and ascension; and by the coming of the Holy Ghost." We know who has commanded us thus to pray; but we know that it is not Jesus Christ. Happily, his own words are placed upon record, and they are: "When ye pray say,

Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, *thine* is the kingdom," &c. *We* follow his direction; we conceive that we are bound to do so; we think that we are likely to be led into misconception in opinion, and error in practice, by following any other guide; and because this is our belief, and because we act in conformity to it, we are denounced as heretics.

Is it possible that, if Jesus Christ knew that it was proper and necessary for his diciples to pray to three Persons in one God, and that to teach them this was one great object for which he came into the world, he would never tell them so; would he allow such an opportunity as the present to escape, without disclosing to them this momentous truth, and would never, that we know of, avail himself of any other occasion to do so? Even supposing, what can never be proved, that his disciples were already fully instructed in the doctrine of the Trinity, it is evident that they were not satisfied with regard to the manner in which they ought to worship it. They were, at least, not sure that they ought to say, "O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three Persons in one God." They had never been in the habit of using such a formulary; and they were not yet convinced that it was their duty to do so. They apply therefore to their master for instruction; and instead of directing them to pray after this new mode, he commands them to employ the language to which they had always been accustomed; for every person knows that the words of the Lord's Prayer are a selection from the liturgy in common use among the Jews in the days of our Lord.

When the diciples of our Lord perceiving that he was in the daily habit of praying to the Father, and to no other person or being; when this was the practice to which they themselves were always accustomed; when they expressly asked him if this practice were right, and he assured them it was, by directing them to continue the use of the common language,—could they possibly believe that they were to worship two other persons besides the one invocated in the form prescribed? Could they conceive that Jesus

Christ himself was one of those other persons? He whose most humble and devout addresses to the Father they so often witnessed, could they imagine that this very Being was the Father, or an essential part of the Father; If so, to whom could they suppose his devotions were addressed? Could they imagine it was God praying to God. ‡

The form of prayer prescribed by our Lord is sanctioned as a model of worship by *every passage of Scripture* that inculcates the duty of prayer; and the authority of Unitarianism is also confirmed by every instance that the New Testament affords of worship being offered. As to the first, see Rom. xv. 6. Ephes. v. 20. Col. i. 12. & iii. 17. And as to the second, see Ephes. iii. 14. Col. i. 3.

The very circumstance of our being commanded to worship God in the name of Christ, is a distinct and direct intimation that Christ himself is not to be worshiped. In all the varied statements of Trinitarianism, I have found nothing that has been adduced to disprove this conclusion, and how is it possible that any thing could be, as long as language has a specific meaning? Moreover, are not the words of Christ in our text, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name," placed in direct opposition to putting up petitions to himself, and used in distinction from offering up prayer to the Father?

In what single instance do we find our Lord addressing his prayer in the manner of modern Christians, to a second or a third person of the Godhead? In what passage does he address 'God the Son,' or 'God the Holy Spirit,' or the 'Triune Deity, three persons in one God?' Yet surely, if the human nature could speak and act apart from the divine, (which Trinitarians maintain as an essential part of their system, and by means of which alone they attempt to reconcile the circumstance of Jesus offering prayer with his supposed independence of power), we should, upon the Trinitarian hypothesis, have had at least some, if not many, such instances. Our great examplar

‡ See Dr. T. S. Smith's Appeal in behalf of Unitarian Christians.

would not have left us, as many modern Christians seem to think he has done, imperfect models of devotion. He would not have addressed the 'first person' only, to the exclusion of the second and the third, though co-equal, co-essential, and eternal. He would not have allowed his followers to be more full and perfect in their devotions than himself. He would have furnished, both by precept and example, an unanswerable justification of the practice of those who address him in his supposed divine nature through a long series of petitions, saying, "Good Lord, we beseech thee to hear us." Thus using the very epithet which he certainly rejected.

Let the serious Christian consider how far he is justified in framing his devout addresses to his God, without clear and distinct authority from Scripture, and upon a model altogether different from that which Jesus Christ and his Apostles have furnished; in disregarding that plain injunction of our Lord, upon which there is so much reason to believe that his first followers acted: "In that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."

Further, to worship two beings alike, we must entertain towards each the same degree of grateful, loving, and adoring sentiments. But this, according to the representations that are given in Trinitarianism of their respective characters, is impossible. The peculiar offices ascribed to Christ by the popular theology make him the most attractive person in the Godhead. The Father is the depositary of the justice, the vindicator of the right, the avenger of the laws, of the Divinity. The Son, the brightness of the divine mercy, stands between the incensed Deity and guilty humanity, exposes his meek head to the storms and his compassionate breast to the sword of the divine justice, carries our whole load of punishment, satisfies the justice and bears the strokes of the vengeance-teeming hand of the Father, while his own justice is not satisfied. To the Son, therefore, it is that we owe salvation, and by no means to him who exacts for our iniquities a full and

fearful payment. Supposing, however, that, according to the common theology, we owe to the Father our salvation in some sense, still the Son must be the supreme object of our affection—to him our greatest gratitude and our most fervent praise are certainly due. How is it possible, then, that we can give the same degree of pious worship to the Father that we must give to the Son? And, if not, it is impossible we can be commanded to worship both as God; for to God who is the Father *supreme* worship is due.

If Jesus be worshiped, he must be so, considered as a *person*. On the Trinitarian hypothesis, his person is constituted of a human nature as well as a divine. But as a nature is a mere abstraction, it is impossible for us to worship his divine nature without at the same time worshiping the human. The supposition, therefore, that we must worship Jesus, necessarily produces the idea that his human nature as well as his divine is to be worshiped; that his humanity is to be deified; that a creature is to receive the adoration of the universe. These arguments have never yet been shewn to be fallacious, and undoubtedly they never can.

But you will conceive that there are certainly some reasons adduced in justification of the practice of worshiping Jesus. There are no doubt a few, and these we shall now examine.—The case of Stephen has been alleged as an example of the worship of Christ. But it must be remarked that, before offering up prayer, Christ appeared to him in vision; and there is every reason to suppose that when Stephen offered up his petition, he either conceived that Jesus was in some manner present with him, or that he saw Jesus as formerly. Now, there is a very wide difference between offering up petitions to a present being, and to one that is not so. 2. It was in the character of "the Son of man standing on the right hand of God," that Stephen addressed Jesus; for in that character Stephen describes him in his account of the vision. It was therefore as a being distinct from God, and obviously inferior to him, that Stephen regarded Jesus in addressing him. 3. The difference of the posture assumed by Stephen when

he addresses God, clearly indicates that supreme worship was not intended in his former address to Jesus; and the different kind of petition he put up to God, supposes that he regarded Jesus as an inferior being. 4. If this instance prove any thing, it proves too much; for if it countenance the propriety of giving supreme worship to Jesus, it affords also a precedent for making him a *distinct* object of worship—for praying to him apart from the first and the third persons of Trinity.

It has been further said that there are some instances in which Jesus is represented as receiving worship from the Jews while he was on earth. A more weak and preposterous idea cannot well be imagined. They who urge this seem not to be aware of the latitude of meaning in which the Greek word *proskuneo* is employed. See, for example, Dan. ii. 46. Gen. xxiii. 7, 12.

The word, in the instances alleged, is in fact the one most commonly used to denote that respect and veneration which men are accustomed to render to their superiors. Had Christ permitted himself to be treated as an object of religious worship, and that in a public manner too, it would not have been overlooked by the scribes and pharisees. On this ground they would not have failed to condemn him as an enemy to the most fundamental principle of the law, the worship of the one God. Their total silence on this point proves that they did not consider the worship he received as of the same kind with that due to God. The words *leitourgeo, latreuo, sebomai,* and *proseuchomai,* are never applied as expressive of the worship that was on any occasion given to Jesus; but universally to that which was given to the Father.

The only other argument for the worship of Christ is drawn from the use of the word *epikaleomai* in conjunction with the phrase 'the name of Jesus,' as in Acts ix. 14. xxii. 16. 1 Cor. i. 2. 2 Tim. ii. 22. Now, all these passages might with equal propriety be rendered 'that call themselves by; that take upon themselves the name of Christ; or that call the name of Jesus upon them.' These are precisely the same in meaning. The phrase from its

frequent occurrence appears to have been a common and well understood form of expression. It occurs frequently in the midst of historical narrative, where the writer is simply stating a fact or designating a class or profession of persons, and where those who profess the name of Christ would have equally well comported with the drift of the passages.

According to a very common form of Hebrew phraseology, the being or person who assumes a peculiar property in any thing is represented as calling it by or giving it a name. Thus in Isai. xliii. 1. xlix. 1. Gen. xxvi. 18—22. Isai. lvi. 5. lxv. 15. And as the being who claimed a peculiar property in any thing was said to give it a name; so the thing possessed was frequently said to be called by the name of the possessor. Thus Israel, the ark, the temple, are all said to be called by the name of the possessor. Of this form of speech the examples are very numerous. Deut. xxviii. 10. 2 Sam. vi. 2. Isai. iv. 1. Gen. xlviii. 16. Acts xv. 17. James iv. 7. &c. In exact conformity with this phraseology, he who makes himself the possession, ranges himself under the standard, devotes himself to the cause and service of another, is said to call himself by that person's name, or perhaps to invoke his name as the name by which he would be called. Of this we have a remarkable instance in Isai. xliv. 5, "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by (according to the Septuagint *shall call upon)* the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and call himself by the name of Israel."

It is hardly necessary to observe that the Hebrew word translated *boesetai,* in the first clause of the verse, may be rendered with equal if not greater propriety as it is in innumerable other passages by the Greek verb *epikaleomai,* in which class the parallelism to the class of texts referred to in the New Testament would have been as exact as possible. It cannot surely be supposed that the prophet intended or that the writer of the Greek version understood him to speak of any one who should worship Jacob in Israel. Compare Gen. xlviii. 16.

That calling upon the name of Christ does not imply any devout communion with him, or address of prayer to him, may be deduced from the very form of expression employed in Acts ix. 21, "destroyed them who called on this name." Surely if these auditors of Paul meant to describe the disciples as worshiping Jesus, the expression would not have been "which called on this name," but rather, 'on this Jesus,' or at least, 'on the name of Jesus.' We may speak of invoking or assuming a name, but hardly of worshiping it. Paul says, "I appeal before Festus," literally, "I invoke or call upon him." Here doubtless a species of invocation is intended; but it is that of an absent person, and implies no more than the acknowledgment of his authority and a desire to await his decision: "I stand at Cæsar's judgment-seat—I invoke his name as that of my lawful judge." Why may not Christians be said to invoke the name of their Lord and master in a somewhat similar sense—to acknowledge his authority and await his final decision in religious matters, as they do that of the supreme civil magistrate in civil affairs? †

That the phrase "calling upon the name of the Lord" bears the sense we give it, was the opinion of the learned Schleusner, himself a Trinitarian. Dr. Hammond, with whom Locke agrees, says that *epikaleisthai* signifies to be called by the name of Jesus as by a surname, marking the peculiar union which subsists between believers and Christ, as of a spouse with her husband, and of a slave with his master, who is called by his master's name. Whether we adopt the passive or middle sense, the words still convey the same meaning; for, as Schleusner remarks, the formulary *epikaleisthai onoma* unusually signifies to profess some certain person's religion. The difference in the middle and the passive use of the verb is of no consequence.

Among the various senses enumerated by Dr. Clarke, in which this phrase is used, only one implies direct invocation. Dr. Hammond, speaking of the word generally in the New Testament, says expressly that *epikaleisthai*

† See Dr. Hutton's Sermon.

signifies to be named or surnamed, Matth. x. 3. Luke xxii. 3. Acts i. 23. iv. 36. and in other places, in which it has a passive and not an active signification.

The use of *cognomina* to *epikaleomai* is common both in Xenophon and Lucian. The conjunction of *epikaleomai* with *onoma* in the sense of religious subjection or allegiance, is an idiom which seems to have been imported into the Greek from the Hebrew, and to have been adopted by the Apostle from the Septuagint.

We have further objections to the doctrine of Christ's Deity, drawn from its practical influence. We regard it as unfavourable to devotion, by dividing and distracting the mind in its communion with God. It is a great excellence of the doctrine of God's unity, that it offers to us ONE OBJECT of supreme homage, adoration, and love, one infinite Father, one Being of Beings, one original and fountain, to whom we may refer all good, on whom all our powers and affections may be concentrated, and whose lovely and venerable nature may pervade all our thoughts. True piety, when directed to an undivided Deity, has a chasteness, a singleness, most favourable to religious awe and love. Now the Trinity sets before us three distinct objects of supreme adoration; three infinite persons, having equal claims on our hearts; three divine agents, performing different offices, and to be acknowledged and worshiped in different relations. And is it possible, we ask, that the weak and limited mind of man can attach itself to these with the same power and joy, as to one *infinite Father*, the only First Cause, in whom all the blessings of nature and redemption meet, as their centre and source? Must not devotion be distracted by the equal and rival claims of three equal persons? and must not the worship of the conscientious, consistent Christian be disturbed by apprehension, lest he withhold from one or another of these, his due portion of homage?

We also think that the doctrine of the Trinity injures devotion, not only by joining to the Father other objects of worship, but by taking from the Father the supreme affection, which is his due, and transferring it to the Son. This

is a most important view. That Jesus Christ, if exalted into the infinite Divinity, should be more interesting than the Father, is precisely what might be expected from history, and from the principles of human nature. Men want an object of worship like themselves, and the great secret of idolatry lies in this propensity. A God clothed in our form, and feeling our wants and sorrows, speaks to our weak nature more strongly, than a Father in heaven, a pure spirit, invisible, and unapproachable, save by the reflecting and purified mind. We believe too, that this worship, though attractive, is not most fitted to spiritualize the mind; that it awakens human transport, rather than that deep veneration of the moral perfections of God, which is the essence of piety.† Indeed, the indivisibility of thought will not permit us to pray freely to more than one object at the same time; the very attempt to divide the attention confuses it.

† See Dr. Channing's Sermon, &c.

LECTURE VIII.

ON THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

REVELATION III. 14.

The beginning of the creation of God.

THERE is no book in the New Testament which, in my apprehension, contains in it stronger evidence of the truth of the great principles of Anti-Trinitarianism than the Apocalypse. Every new perusal of it affords me fresh matter of wonder that Trinitarian ingenuity should ever have professed itself adequate to the task of finding support to its dogmas in this part of Scripture, or of reconciling with its peculiarities the numerous clear and distinct intimations of the personal unity of God and the peerless majesty of the Father which run through the whole of it.

Considering the character of the Apocalypse, it may with the utmost propriety be affirmed, that had the Deity of Jesus been the fundamental doctrine of Christianity, as it is strangely enough supposed to be, we should have found it blazing forth in this book in the most splendid manner imaginable. There, if any where, we should have found the glory of Christ's person as God-man depicted in the most lofty, august, and impressive manner—illuminating almost every page with its effulgent splendour, bespangling every leaf with its beauteous attractions, and from its transcendent, dazzling, and overwhelming grandeur and majesty, totally eclipsing the glory of all the characters of the visions set forth to our view.

That the representations of the glory of the person of Christ, given in this portion of Scripture, are of a descrip-

tion much more elevated and sublime than those of the other characters introduced into the scenes, is certainly true. But instead of its having been the design of the Revelation to exhibit Jesus to view in the character of the Infinite God, the *uniform and formal manner* in which all the addresses to the churches are introduced by Christ with the mention of his inferior, finite character and capacity, naturally leads us to suppose that in forming these prefaces he had in view the errors concerning his person that were soon to make their appearance in the church; that the several introductions to the letters were intended to afford a positive voice against such errors when they should arise.

These prefatory statements of the Apocalypse, together with the general tenour of those parts in any way connected with the subject, appear to me to afford as complete evidence for the unrivaled Majesty of God the Father as can possibly be conceived. What, my brethren, have Trinitarians upon which to build their most singular conclusions? Nothing more than a few scattered passages of the Old and New Testaments, thought by them to ascribe to Jesus the names and titles, the attributes, the works, and the worship of the Supreme. These form no prominent or essential part of the subject with which they stand connected. It was not the exclusive or the special and direct purpose of the writer to state the doctrine supposed by Trinitarians to be conveyed by them, and though the expressions were understood in a different sense from that which Trinitarians attach to them, the general sentiments and ideas of the passages in connexion with which they occur would not appear to be either incoherent or incomplete; either more or less than the writer meant *directly* to convey by the words.

The case is altogether different as it respects those passages which either state or from which it may be inferred that the Father alone is God, and that Jesus is a being distinct from and inferior to him. In the book before us we find one continued string of passages that either state or clearly and directly warrant the inference that Jesus is

not Jehovah. We find the names and titles of Deity; the attributes, the works, and the worship, belonging to the true God, given to one being in distinction from another being called 'the Lamb,' and the argument from this in favour of our peculiar sentiments is very much strengthened by some circumstances that attend the application of these, to the one in distinction from the other.

In their acclamations and ascriptions of praise, it seems to have been the grand aim and prominent object of some of the characters of the visions to delineate the highest glories of Christ as well as of the Father; and we nevertheless find that almost all they appropriate to Christ is inconsistent with the infinite perfection and absolute supremacy of Deity, and of a cast and complexion different from that which they appropriate to the Father, and wholly inferior to it. These positions we shall make good by the following review of those parts of the book of Revelation that have any connexion with the point.

First, then, you will observe that the titles God, Lord, and Lord God, are given to the Father in distinction from the Son.

Out of thirteen I shall adduce merely four passages in which this appears: chap. xxi. 22. xix. 6, 7. xv. 3, 4. In each of these instances the Father is distinguished also from the Son by the ascription to him of the attribute of omnipotence, and in one of them by that also of infinite holiness. In it the occurrence is very peculiar, because the titles and attributes of Deity are not merely given to the Father in distinction from the Son, but are ascribed to the Father by the Son himself in conjunction with Moses the ancient legislator of the Jews. The circumstance of the titles and attributes of Deity being ascribed to one person, is a plain proof that no other person is what the appropriation of these titles and attributes shew that person to be to whom they are applied, because the notion of a plurality of supreme divinities is opposed to the conclusions of reason and the dictates of Revelation, and because no reason can be assigned why, especially in such a part of Scripture as that we are considering, the Son should

not be set before our view in the same glorious light as that in which the Father is, were he indeed one with the Father or in personality equal to him.

The circumstance of the titles and the attributes of Deity being given to the Father in distinction from the Son, affords an additional species of argument for the exclusive Deity of the Father. Both of these kinds of evidence we have in the already mentioned passages, but in the last (chap. xv. 3.) there is another and a still more powerful kind of proof of the inferiority of Jesus Christ to the Father.

Had we found the Father addressed in the language of that passage by Moses only, this of itself would have been a plain ascription to the Father exclusively of perfection which is distinctive of Godhead; and this would have proved in the very terms the exclusive Deity of the Father. But when the ascription is by the Son himself, does he not in the very words exclude himself from the possession of infinite holiness? Does he not do so as much as Moses did, who tuned along with him the hymn of praise which so sublimely employed their tongues? Can the attributes ascribed and the titles given, be appropriated also to him who is the Lamb, and who under that distinctive character joins with Moses in calling the object of their praise "The Lord God Almighty, and the *only* holy." Surely the Lamb was not in any sense the very same being with—surely he was not in any sense equal in glory to him whom he thus joins with Moses in praising? No, my brethren; Jesus never claimed Deity at all. What were his words to the lawyer who styled him 'good master?' Do they not contain a clear and manifest intimation of the truth we are proving? "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God."

'God' and 'the Lamb' are used as distinctive epithets in every part of the work. How, if these titles be equally applicable to the Father and the Son, the former should be confined to the Father and the latter to Jesus, is certainly a singular circumstance; a circumstance of itself sufficient to shew that the one is exclusively what he is

exclusively denominated, 'God.' The superiority of the Father to the Son is also manifest from those passages which represent God as sitting *upon* the throne, in distinction from the Lamb, who is said to be merely *in* the throne, or, as the expression means, in the middle space between the throne and the elders. To this purpose see chap. v. 6, 7, 13. vi. 16. vii. 9, 10, 15—17. The expression '*upon the throne*' is no doubt figurative; but it is evidently meant to denote a state of supreme majesty, unrivaled glory, and absolute dominion. Now the circumstance of the Father only being represented as sitting *upon* the throne, is a plain proof that the Son does not possess a unity of essence with the Father, or an equality of perfection and dominion with him. Because, had the Son been the compeer of Jehovah the Father, he certainly would have been represented as occupying the same station of dignity as the Father. But more than this, the dignity denoted by the phrase 'sitting *upon* the throne' is not only exclusively represented as belonging to the Father, but appears clearly to be ascribed to the Father by way of distinguishing him from the Son, who is represented as merely 'in the midst of the throne;' a plain and obvious indication of the unrivaled majesty of the one, and the subordination and inferiority of the other.

It is indeed true that the throne is once called "the throne of God and the Lamb." What then? The station of the Lamb was certainly within the floor and footstool of the throne, which is represented in the description as bounded by a circle or an emerald. The Lamb occupies the same throne indeed as the Father, but his station is beneath that of the Father; he does not occupy the same part of the throne with the Father; he does not sit *upon* it, which the Father does. And perceiving this marked difference, you cannot think, I should suppose, that the mere occupation of the same throne, or sitting in the middle space between the throne and the elders, is a circumstance that tends in the least degree to prove the Deity of Christ.

Lest, however, this should enter your conceptions, let me tell you that though indeed the occupying of the station denoted by 'sitting in the midst of the throne' must be honourable and glorious in a very high degree, yet not so much so, after all, as to lead us to conceive of Jesus as sustaining an office and exalted to a dignity which no other intelligence appears in. For from chap. iv. 6. & v. 6. it appears distinctly enough that there were more than Jesus in the midst of the throne. The elders, whomsoever they are intended to represent, sat along with him in the floor of the throne. Moreover, how or by what means did Christ reach that kind of dignity which is thus denoted? Hear his own account of the matter: "He that overcometh shall sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." From whom, I ask, could such expressions proceed? From none but a being who in consequence, and solely in consequence, of having done his duty, was rewarded by that Superior whose commands he obeyed. It was on earth that Jesus fought his victory. It was not, therefore, till after he was on earth that he was admitted to sit within the precincts of Jehovah's throne. Had he been the God of the universe, could he have been exalted; could he have been subjected to temptation; could he have 'overcome?' Surely no. Had he been the Infinite God, having had an eternal and inherent right to sit upon the throne of universal government, could his being exalted to sit upon that throne (supposing it were said that he had been so) have been attributed to his having 'overcome?'

Further, I ask, does Jesus give to his followers the promise of being raised to sit upon the throne of the Almighty, of becoming colleagues and assessors of Deity, of being exalted to an equality with himself or with God? Yet this must be implied in the passage I have quoted, if 'sitting in the throne' does not denote a state of dignity subordinate to that of Jehovah.

In further establishment of my position respecting the evidence of Unitarianism that is to be found in the Apocalypse, I remark that in several parts of it, God is worshiped

as distinguished from the Lamb, who is merely praised in conjunction with the Almighty. See chap. iv. 11. vii. 11, 12. xi. 15, 16. v. 13, 14.

Now the very circumstance of worship being confined to the Father, is sufficient to shew that Christ is not that being to whom worship is due, because no reason can be assigned why, if Jesus be equally entitled to supreme worship with the Father, that worship should not be given to the Son as well as to the Father, and because there cannot be more objects of supreme worship than one. But, besides this, God is worshiped to distinguish him from the Lamb, who is only praised. It has, however, been contended by Trinitarians that the circumstance of Christ's being praised in the same terms with God warrants the inference that he is praised on equal grounds with his Father, and that he is consequently God. It is true indeed that "blessing, and glory, and honour, and praise," are ascribed both to God and to the Lamb, and to the latter as well as to the former this tribute was due; for we are elsewhere informed that Christ is raised to this pre-eminence as a reward of his conduct as the Messiah. The praise of the celestial choir is therefore quite consistent with the principles and sentiments of Unitarians.

But may not the same terms be used in an inferior sense as applied to Christ? "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power," admit of degrees, and may therefore be applied to two objects in the same sentence with different modifications of meaning. If "all Israel greatly feared before the Lord and Samuel," as in 1 Sam. xii. 18.—if all Israel "bowed down their heads, and worshiped Jehovah and the king," as in 1 Chron. xxix. 20.—if Hezekiah and certain princes "blessed Jehovah and his people Israel," as in 2 Chron. xxxi. 8.—if David said to Abigail, "Blessed be Jehovah, God of Israel, who sent thee this day to meet me; and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou," as in 1 Sam. xxv. 32, 33.—and yet Samuel, the king, the people, Israel, and Abigail, be inferior to Jehovah? may not "blessing, and honour, and glory, and power," be ascribed in the same sentence "to him that

sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb," and yet the Lamb be inferior to him that sitteth upon the throne.

The very appellation by which the Father is distinguished in the ascriptions of praise, and which is applied throughout the book to him only, is evidently designed to imply his superiority, and indicates therefore, on the part of the celestial choirs, an express acknowledgment of his claims to a profounder homage. We may express feelings of the same kind by the same words, but they are always understood to vary in intensity as their objects are more or less calculated to excite them. Moreover, if one being only is *worshiped,* which we have already seen to be the case, he alone must be *praised* in the character of God; the other therefore receives the homage of the song upon very different accounts from those on which the other receives it, and in a very inferior degree. Worship is not merely praise. Worship is given only to God.

It is not unworthy of remark also, that both the passages which represent Jesus as receiving praise are followed by a representation of the characters of the vision "*worshiping God,*"—not merely ascribing "salvation, and glory, and power," as in the previous ascription to God and to the Lamb, but *worshiping,*—not God and the Lamb, as in the song of praise, but God only; a circumstance that strikingly indicates the difference of character in which each is regarded, and the difference of the nature and degree of homage given to the Father from that given to the Son.

In chap. xv. 3. we have seen that Jesus himself joins in the anthem of praise to God the Father, whom he denominates "the only holy." He cannot therefore be the very being whom he joins with Moses in praising. He who united with Moses the man in tuning a hymn of praise to the Lord God Almighty, could not himself be entitled to praise equal either in kind or in degree to that which he and Moses were employed in rendering.

The ascriptions of praise, moreover, while only few in number to the Son, are numerous to the Father. Before God also the characters of the vision are represented as

"falling on their faces—casting their crowns—covering their faces with their wings—resting not day nor night from the work of praise," sounding aloud their hallelujahs, all clearly indicative of their sense of the unequaled majesty of him whom they exclusively addressed, and before whom they stood in adoring wonder.

Finally, on this part of our subject I may remark, that to any one who candidly reads from ver. 8 to 14 of chap. xxii. it must appear that Jesus himself was the angel who refused the worship that John was about to give him. And, at any rate, the answer of the angel (who, if not Jesus, was his messenger, and as such might be supposed to claim for him all the honour that was his due) is a plain and evident presumptive proof that Jesus was not entitled to religious worship. "Worship God,"—not God and the Lamb, observe.

Are we wrong then, my brethren, in refusing to call Jesus the Omnipotent God? Are we wrong in refusing to place Jesus on the throne of the Eternal? Are we wrong in refusing to give Jesus that supreme worship which Heaven's intelligences never gave him, and which to all appearance he absolutely refused? Lofty indeed are their strains of praise; but to the God of the Lamb is their *worship* confined. While under the consciousness of nothingness they bow before uncreated excellence, and with overwhelming admiration and transport they cast their crowns before the throne, they speak of and praise him who is now worshiped as God Almighty, in the character of the Lamb who shed his blood to make a cleansing of sin. High indeed was his excellence when he was upon earth! higher now it must be when he is in heaven! But in the light of underived and boundless perfection, finite goodness and finite glory must dwindle behind the shade.

I declare there is no honour given by the powers of upper Zion to Jesus Christ our Lord, which we do not account it our privilege, our honour, and our duty to give him. Ready always are our tongues to publish forth his excellency, and to sound his praise. "Worthy, worthy, is the Lamb," are words which find a responsive echo in

our inmost souls. The glories of his character, his triumphs, and his reign, we do sincerely admire, and we rejoice in the prospect of ascribing to our victorious and mighty Redeemer "salvation, and glory, and honour, and power."

His highest happiness arose from doing his Father's will, and to do that will in obedience to him as the ambassador of the Everlasting, under the sanctions and principles of his Gospel, is to honour him in the highest manner he ever claimed, or which God, his God, ever commanded or does authorize us to do. And, O how happy would it be to behold those whose zeal for his Godhead flows like an impetuous torrent, acting towards him in the way that the belief of his mere Messiahship ought to dictate.

Though at the notion of his Deity we do certainly spurn, we would nevertheless ever speak of his holy life; of that moral glory which encircled his career in this thoughtless and maddened world, and which shining around him with a dazzling and a matchless radiance, distinguished him as the most dignified and most worthy of the race. Touched would we be with admiring sympathy in the agonies of that death which confirmed the everlasting covenant, and that seized the Saviour only that he might shew to the race of Adam the "power of an endless life." We would revere and obey his excellent mandates; we would copy his illustrious example; we would rejoice in his mighty powers, in his celestial glory, and in his future coming.

Do we, my brethren, look forward in joyful anticipation to the felicities of Zion? Jesus is embodied in the thought. With every view of the world to come that elevates the soul in solemnity and joy, Jesus is associated. Are we to exult in the beatific presence of the Lord of sabaoth? Are we to join in the acclamations of the multitudes that fill the mansions of unceasing bliss? Are we to soar aloft in the sublimity of adoration in concert with the higher strains of those august intelligences that encompass the Eternal's throne, and make heaven's arches ring with their

enraptured swells of holy joy? The bliss and glory of the whole will secondarily arise from Jesus. Upon his diadem of beauty will we not gaze—the meridian splendour of his countenance will we not admire? He will lead the human and angelic hosts; he will conduct us in our blissful career; he will be an object of our harmonious praise.

Compared indeed with the glory of infinite perfection, the excellence of creatures must ever be nothing—must be as the feeble glimmerings of a taper compared with the blaze of the ruler of the day. And though seraphim cannot speak forth half Jehovah's praise, and though therefore our most lofty hymns cannot reach the majesty of his attributes; though as the great source of all that is great and worthy to be adored, he does claim and must receive our most mighty, our divinest bursts and songs of hallelujah; yet it is his will that to Jesus, his Son, we should raise our notes of admiration, in accent loud, in harmony delightful; so that the excellence of the Lamb, as well as the peerless glories of his God, shall for ever swell the tone of our celestial melody.

Ultimately, however, shall we be praising Him who made our Saviour what he is; from whom all his dignity, his power, and his glory proceeded. "Every tongue shall indeed confess that Jesus Christ is Lord," only however "to the glory of God the Father."

LECTURE IX.

ON THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

REVELATION III. 14.

The beginning of the creation of God.

HAVING already seen that the names and titles and the worship belonging to Deity are given to the Father throughout this book, and not only are confined to him, but given to him in distinction from the Lamb, when Christ is spoken of confessedly in his highest character, whatsoever it be, and consequently in that capacity in which, according to the principles of Trinitarianism, they might have been applied. And having seen also that the attributes of omnipotence and infinite holiness are thus given to the Father alone, I now proceed to remark that the Father is frequently distinguished from the Lamb by the ascription to him of the attribute of eternal existence. He is the being "who liveth for ever and ever—who is, and who was, and who is to come."

It has indeed been said that it is Jesus who speaketh thus in chap. i. 8, "I am Alpha and Omega, the begining and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, which was, and which is to come, the Almighty," and against the analogy of the whole book, in which the perfections of eternity and almighty power are always given to the Father in distinction from the Son, it has been contended from this single passage that Christ is the Almighty and Eternal Jehovah. But certainly against a mere supposition it must be abundantly sufficient to satisfy any candid mind on the subject to reply, that as in every other passage in Revelation in which the attributes of eternity and omnipotence and the

title 'LORD GOD' occur, they are confined in their application to God in distinction from the Lamb, it must naturally be supposed that in this verse God the Father is the speaker.

It has further been argued that as the terms 'Alpha and Omega' are applied to God, they must denote something exclusively applicable to Deity, and that consequently when used by Christ in reference to himself, he asserts his absolute eternity of existence. To this it cannot but be sufficient to reply, that there are many terms and epithets applied to God that are also applied to men. The Father may be 'the Alpha and Omega,' and Jesus may be also, and yet the former only may be God. If indeed the words 'Alpha and Omega' did really import eternal being, the case would be different. But that they do not denote this, is obvious from the following considerations. 1. The words are evidently figurative. Taken literally they would state that Jesus was the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. The other phrase which is synonymous with Alpha and Omega, viz. 'the first and the last, the beginning and the end,' would make God to have had a beginning or to have originally commenced existence, and would imply that both God and Christ will have an end or termination of being, that all creation shall cease to be, and that finally the creator and Christ will do the same. Taken literally, instead of conveying the idea of eternal being, they convey the reverse.

2. The connexion in which the use of the phrase 'Alpha and Omega' occurs in chap. i. 8. is sufficient to shew that Trinitarians mistake its meaning. The verse runs thus, "I am Alpha and Omega, saith he who is, and who was, and who is to come." Now if the expression 'Alpha and Omega' imply the same idea as the following phrase, 'who is, who was, and who is to come,' which does certainly denote eternity of existence, is there not a singular tautology in the declaration? And will not the sentence be made to run thus? "I am the Eternal, saith the Lord who is the Eternal."

3. It is worthy of remark that the expression 'Alpha and Omega' is never used in the language of ascription to

God in all the book of Revelation. When the characters of the visions ascribe eternal existence to Jehovah, it is always by the use of the phrases, 'who is, who was, and who is to come—who liveth for ever and ever.' This is a circumstance which, on the supposition that 'Alpha and Omega' denote eternal existence, cannot be accounted for. It cannot be shewn how in the language of ascription to God, the expressions 'who is, who was, and who is to come,' and 'who liveth for ever and ever,' are always used to denote his eternal existence, and yet that the phrase 'Alpha and Omega,' which is never thus applied, is also expressive of eternal existence.

Expressions of similar import with 'Alpha and Omega' are applied to God in several parts of the prophecy of Isaiah relating to the deliverance of the Jews from captivity by means of Cyrus and the Persians. These passages, as has been observed by an eminent Trinitarian, are intended to denote the superintending providence of God, which comprehends the past, the present, and the future. He is contemporary with the earliest and the latest events in that chain of causes and effects by which he accomplishes his stupendous counsels. When applied to Jesus, the meaning plainly is, that he is contemporary with the earliest and the latest events in that dispensation over which he is ordained by the Almighty to preside. Jesus is the institutor of the Christian dispensation, and he will be the finisher of it. He is the "author and the finisher of our faith."

It has been contended also that in chap. iii. 2. Jesus challenges to himself the attribute of omniscience when he says, "I am he that searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men." But do not the very first words of the book distinctly imply that his knowledge is limited and derived? "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God *gave* unto him," the subjects of this book are denominated; which would not be the case if Jesus had possessed in himself the attribute of omniscience, or the knowledge of every thing in the universe, whether past, present, or future.

It is very evident from the passage that Christ's knowledge of the human heart is connected with his office as judge, and is the necessary qualification for it. Is it not the universal doctrine of Scripture that he is judge by delegation and divine authority? And is it not hence rational to suppose that the necessary qualifications were imparted to him? If he had not an original and sovereign right to the office of judge; if it be evident that his sustaining the office of judge is a part of that exaltation which is the reward of his services and labours; it is equally clear that the qualifications for that office are finite and limited, since omniscience cannot exist but in conjunction with sovereign and underived dignity, dominion, and authority, which Christ's are not. If he is judge by appointment, by the will and authority of God, he is qualified for the office by the power of God.

The verse preceding the words we are considering distinctly implies that all his authority as the governor and judge of the world is derived from the independent Jehovah. "To him that overcometh will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, &c. even as I received power from my Father." Now if he received the power of this dominion over the nations, why not also the power of searching the hearts? If he was not possessed of absolute authority, neither was he possessed of omniscience; for the one cannot be the attribute of a being who has not the other. If he received one thing from God, he must have received all; but God can receive nothing from another. If he could not give power by his own pleasure, neither could he search the hearts by his own power of searching.

It is said, however, that the power of searching the hearts cannot be imparted, and that as Christ possesses it, he is infinite in his nature. But by what principle of reasoning can the power of searching the hearts of this world's race be identified with absolute omniscience? Is our world any thing but a speck in the vast and immeasurable immensity of the dominions of the Eternal? And does the supposition that Jesus is qualified to judge the

world, imply any thing more than that God imparts to his Son an inconceivably small portion of his own knowledge?

Was not Elisha empowered to know the heart and the thoughts of Gehazi when at a distance from him, and also to know what the king of Assyria did even in his bed-chamber? And the same Great Being who thus enabled him to know the thoughts of two persons could unquestionably have enabled him to know the thoughts of as many others as he pleased; nay, if such was his sovereign will, of the whole human race. And cannot the Almighty enable the blessed Saviour in a glorified state, with all his mental powers enlarged and improved beyond all we can conceive, to know the thoughts and read the hearts of the whole human race, if this should be necessary to qualify him to pass sentence upon every one of them either at the same time or within a given space of longer or shorter duration, as shall appear best to his wisdom. To deny this, is to rob God of his power with the view of exalting his knowledge.

Can a man do this? or, can a man do that? is not the question. But can God enable Jesus to perform the work of judgment? And who is he that can have the presumption and confidence to say, no?

How is it, I may ask, that persons who believe in the existence of a malignant being of the most extensive powers and, so far as this globe is concerned, of almost absolute ubiquity—of an indweller and corrupter, if not a searcher of hearts—of a created author of sin and misery—should yet find so much difficulty in conceiving the existence of a created Son of God, invested by him, for the highest and most benevolent purposes, with power and authority to administer justice and judgment in his name among men?

The inferiority of Jesus to his Father is repeatedly stated in chap. iii. 12. where Jesus speaks of the Father as his God, which he is also called in the introduction to the book. In some parts, Christ is denominated "the Word of God," in others "the Christ of God," and the "Son of man;" and his common designation is that of "the Lamb."

Upon the whole, then, upon what side of the question does the evidence of this book bear? How is it, I ask, that the titles, the attributes, the works, and the worship of Jehovah are given to the Father, yet not to the Son; but to the Father in distinction from the Son; that in his highest character not one of them is given him, though they are given to the Father?

If distinction of being and the relations of superior and inferior can be inferred from one being called "the Word, the Christ, the Lamb of God, and the Son of man," and another, "the Lord, God, and the Lord God;" by one being said "to live for ever and ever," and addressed as "he who is, who was, and who is to come," and the other being spoken of as "he that liveth, and *was dead*, and is alive for evermore;" by one being called, as in our text, "the chief of the creation of God," a designation clearly implying that he is one of that creation, and by the other being said to have "created all things;" by one being called "the Almighty," and its being said with respect to the other that "he received power of the Father;" by one only being worshiped in distinction from the other, and by the other; by one being addressed by the other as "the only holy;" by one being represented as sitting on the throne, and the other in the middle space between the throne and the elders; by one being called the God of another, and that by the other; by one being represented as supreme in glory, and the other as being exalted by the Father as the reward of his obedience;—then is Unitarianism the doctrine of the Gospel.

It may also be observed, that no mention is made in this book of the third person in the Trinity. Nothing is said of his condescension and love; no glory is given him, neither worship nor praise. If he be God, if an intelligent being at all, how is it that he does not rank in such declarations as this? "I will confess his name before my Father and his holy angels." Indeed the truth is, that there are not above three or four detached passages throughout all the Scriptures that can be brought forward to countenance the doctrine of the Deity of the Holy Spirit.

LECTURE X.

ON THE LOGOS.

JOHN I. 1—17.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, &c.

IT appears that this introduction of John's Gospel was written in opposition to the Gnostics, a sect, or rather a multitude of sects, who, having learned to blend the principles of philosophy with the doctrines of Plato, formed a system most repugnant to the simplicity of Christian faith. The foundation of the Gnostic system was the incorrigible depravity of matter. Upon this principle they made a total separation between the material and the spiritual world. Accounting it impossible to educe out of matter any thing good, they held that the Supreme Being, who presided over the innumerable spirits that were emanations from himself, did not make this earth; but that a spirit, very far removed in character and in rank from the Supreme, formed matter into that order which constitutes the world, and gave life to the different creatures that inhabit the earth. They held that this spirit was the ruler of the creatures he had made, and they considered men, whose souls he imprisoned in earthly tabernacles, as experiencing under his dominion the misery which necessarily arose from their connexion with matter, and as totally estranged from the knowledge of the true God.

Most of the later sects of the Gnostics rejected every part of the Jewish law, because the books of Moses gave a view of the creation inconsistent with their system. But some of the earlier sects, consisting of Alexandrian Jews,

incorporated a respect for the law with the principles of their system. They considered the old dispensation as granted by the *Demiourgos*, the maker of the world. They held him to be incapable, from his want of power, of delivering those who received it, from the thraldom of matter; and they looked for a more glorious messenger whom the compassion of the Supreme Being was to send for the purpose of emancipating the human race.

Those Gnostics who embraced Christianity regarded the Christ as this messenger, an exalted *Aeon*, who, being in some manner united to the man Jesus, put an end to the dominion of the *Demiourgos*, and restored the souls of men to communion with God. To this *Demiourgos* the Christian Gnostics gave the name of *Logos*. And as 'Christ' was understood from the beginning of our Lord's ministry to be equivalent to the Jewish name Messiah, there came to be in their system a direct opposition between Christ and Logos. Logos was the maker of the world; Christ was the *Aeon* sent to destroy the tyranny of Logos.

We have authority for saying that the general principles of the Gnostic system were openly taught by Cerinthus before the publication of the Gospel of John. The authority is that of Irenæus, one of the fathers who lived in the second century, who had in his youth heard Polycarp the disciple of John, and who retained in his memory till death the discourses of Polycarp. There are yet extant of the works of Irenæus four books. In one place of that work he says that Cerinthus taught in Asia that the world was not made by the Supreme, but by a certain power very far removed from the Sovereign of the universe, and ignorant of his nature. In another place he says, John wished by his Gospel to extirpate the errors of Cerinthus, "and that he might shew that there is one God who made all things by his Word." And with the same view, John wrote his Gospel: "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ;" that is, that Jesus and the Christ are not distinct beings—the one a man, the other an *Aeon*.

Though the Evangelist does not mention the name of Cerinthus, it was necessary, in laying down the positions that were to meet his errors, to adopt some of his words, because the Christians of those days could not so readily have applied the statement of the Apostle to the refutation of those doctrines which Cerinthus was spreading among them. And as the chief of those terms 'Logos,' which he thus applied to a vicious spirit, was equivalent to a phrase in common use among the Jews, and had been just used by Philo, a learned Jew from Alexandria, in some books which he published before our Saviour's death, and had probably been borrowed by the Cerinthians; John, by his use of Logos, rescues it from the use of Cerinthus, and restores it to a sense corresponding to the dignity of the Jewish phrase.

You will perceive from this induction the fitness with which the Evangelist introduces the word Logos in this proem, although it had not been used by the other Evangelists who wrote before the errors of Cerinthus.

Before proceeding to ascertain the precise import of the passage, I shall give that translation of the words which I conceive to be most natural and correct. "The Word was in the beginning, and the Word was with God, and God was the word. All things were through it, and without it nothing was that was. In it was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness overspread or admitted it not. It was in the world, and the world was through it, and the world knew it not, &c."

This translation is an exact rendering of the original, and is the translation adopted in Wickliffe's Bible, in the old English translation authorized by Henry VIII., and by Luther in his German translation; also by Dr. Lardner, Dr. Priestley, Mr. Wakefield, &c.

The Cerinthians supposed that Logos was a distinct being from the Supreme, and not God himself considered in the energy of his power, the sense attached by the Jews to the phrase, 'the word of the Lord.' John, by saying that 'God was the Word,' teaches them that the Logos was not, as

they supposed, an intelligent being. The Cerinthians further supposed that the Logos was the supreme artificer of the world. To overthrow this notion, John informs them that all things were merely through the Word; that the Word was merely the instrument in creation. And as this Word was declared to be God, ascribing the creation of all things to the Word as an instrument, was but a peculiar mode of informing them that all things were created by God himself, as the supreme architect. Thus their notions of matter and the Creator of it were overturned.

According to the Gnostics, the Christ, the light of the world, came into the territory of another to emancipate men from the tyranny of their maker. And in opposition to this idea it is that John speaks of the Word as having "come into its own." In some of the systems of the Gnostics, the 'only begotten and Logos' were different *Aeons*. Here it is implied that there is no real distinction between them; that, indeed, Jesus Christ who was flesh, a proper human being, was the real Word and the only-begotten of the Father.

It may appear rather strange that God should be represented as an attribute, and as being that which is afterwards represented as the medium of creation, and that personal actions are attributed to the Word. But, as to the latter, when we consider how common the use of the figure of personification was at the time this Gospel was written, and that it was the constant custom of the Jews to personify the Word, by which they meant Jehovah considered in his authority, commanding or creating power and energy, the mode of speech here adopted seems just what we might have expected it. The same observation serves to remove all difficulty from the first noticed particular; for God may be spoken of as doing this or that by means of any of those attributes which the performance of the specific work calls more especially into exercise; while it is at the same time clear that those attributes are not instruments abstractly considered or viewed apart from the voluntary mind in which they inhere, and which is of course the real cause and the only proper agent.

The Scriptures evidently afford some instances of this form of expression. For instance, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." "By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens, and his hands have formed the crooked serpent." In the first passage it is evident that 'the breath of his mouth' is synonymous with 'his word,' indeed, in both is evidently meant the active commanding might of God, displayed in its creative energy. As the Scriptures speak of God doing certain things through his might, through his power, through the breath of his mouth, through his wisdom, his will, his mercy, and his goodness; so John emphatically declares, in language that would be well understood at the time it was written, that "all things were through the Word." As to the identification of the Word with God, it is in the style of many other passages of Scripture, some of which, as in John's Epistles, represent God as light, as love, &c. Since God is thus spoken of, because holiness and benevolence are so inseparable from his nature, as that without them he would not be what he is; so, in like manner, God is called the Word, because active power, creating energy and might, are essential to his existence. And what foundation is there in all this for the Deity of Jesus, or even for the personality of the Word?

The translation I have proposed, which undoubtedly appears to be correct, and which is also according to the order of the words in the original, determines the meaning of the Word to be the power of God, and God himself. This was the meaning attached to it by the Jews, and in their signification of it the Evangelist would certainly use it. It has indeed been affirmed, that by 'the word of the Lord,' the Jews understood an intelligent being, and that Philo and the Targums give personal names and ascribe personal actions to the Word. There are certainly a few expressions in the Targums respecting the Word apparently of a personal kind; but there are also thousands in the Old Testament of a similar kind equally strong, which yet confessedly do not imply that the subject spoken of is

a person. We should therefore regard such expressions as imply the Word's personality in the same view as the other, viz. as idioms of the language. For instance, what more than a strong personification can we understand in the following words of the Wisdom of Solomon, which refer to God's judgments in Egypt? "Thine almighty Word leaped down from heaven out of thy royal throne, as a fierce man of war into the midst of a land of destruction, and brought thine unfeigned commandment as a sharp sword, and, standing up, filled all things with death; and it touched the heavens, but it stood upon the earth."

We know that the Jews had no revelation respecting the existence of a being distinct from God, called the Word. Whence then could they have derived the knowledge of such a being? Justin Martyr, in his dialogues with Trypho the Jew, expressly ascribes to him the opinion which he endeavours to refute, that the Messiah would be simply, as to his nature, a man. The early Jewish converts thought the same, and so did those among the later Christians, who boldly appealed to antiquity against the confusion introduced into church theology by identifying the Word with the Son of God. The Word, said they, is not the Son of God; but only an attribute, a faculty, a property of the Divine Nature. It is the man Jesus Christ who became the Son of God by the communication of the Word.

It is well known, says Dr. Lardner, that in the Chaldee Paraphrases it is very common to put Mimra Jehovah, the Word of the Lord, for Jehovah or God; and that the Jewish people, more especially those of them who were most zealous for the law and most exempt from foreign and philosophical speculations, used this way of speaking commonly, and by the Word, or the Word of God, understood not a spirit separate from God, but God himself, as St. John does.

As to Philo's writings, in which the Word is called 'the Son of God, the image of God, the instrument of creation,' there is no evidence that John had ever seen them, neither is it certain that Philo did not borrow both his ideas and

language from the school of Plato. Moreover, several very learned Trinitarians have seen cause to believe that Philo had no conception that the Word was an intelligent being; that he considered it was nothing else than the conception formed in the Divine Mind of the work he was to execute. But supposing it could be proved that the Jews did suppose the Word to be an intelligent being, the Evangelist's declaration, that "God was the Word," is inconsistent with their notion.

I shall here quote the illustration that Dr. Watts has given of the meaning of this passage.

"The great and blessed God, considered in his own nature, is far superior to all our thoughts, and exalted high above our most raised apprehensions. And because we are not capable of taking in heavenly ideas in their own sublimest nature, God has been pleased to teach us the heavenly things that relate to himself, in earthly language; and by way of analogy to creatures he has let us know something what God is.

"Among all the creatures that come within the reach of our common and obvious cognizance, human nature is the most perfect; and, therefore, it has pleased the great and glorious God, by resemblances drawn from ourselves, to accommodate the descriptions of himself to our capacities. When he speaks of his own nature in the language of men, he often uses the names of human parts, and members, and faculties, to represent his own properties and actions thereby, that he may bring them within the notice of the lowest capacity and the meanest understanding among the children of men. Therefore he speaks of his *face*, to signify the discovery of himself; his *eyes* to describe his knowledge; his *heart* to describe his thoughts; his *hand* and *arm* to signify his power and activity; and his *mouth* to denote his resolutions or revelations.

"But since in the composition of human nature there are two distinct parts, a soul and a body, and the soul is much the nobler and more exalted principle, it has also pleased God to rise above corporeal images, and to describe himself, his attributes, properties, power, and operations by

way of analogy to a human soul. We know by our own consciousness, or by an inward inspection into ourselves, that our soul or spirit is a being which has understanding, and will, thoughts, inclinations, knowledge, desires, and various powers to move the body. Therefore our Saviour has told us, *God is a spirit,* and the brightest and sublimest representations of God in Scripture, are such as bear an analogy and resemblance to the soul of man, or a spiritual, thinking nature.

"As the chief faculties of our souls are the mind and will, or rather a power of knowing, and a power of acting, so God seems to have revealed himself to us as endued with two divine faculties, his word or wisdom, and his spirit or efficient power. It is by this word and this spirit, that he is represented in Scripture as managing the great concerns of the creation, providence, redemption and salvation: and these three, viz. God the Father, his Word and his Spirit, are held forth to us in Scripture as *one* God, even as the soul of man, his mind and his will, are one spiritual being. Since reason and Scripture agree to teach us the nature of God, and inform us who and what God is by this analogy, I think in our inquiries on this sacred subject, we ought to follow this analogy so far as reason and Scripture allow us. Now it is evident that a human soul, in its nature, is one conscious mind; and it is utterly inconsistent with the nature of it to have two or three distinct conscious principles, or natures, in it, that is, to include two or three different conscious beings; and since we are told that God is one, and God is a spirit, it would be something strange if we must believe that God is two or three spirits."—"If there be some distinctions or differences in the Divine nature greater than of relations, modes or attributes, and less than that of substances, I know not what name to give it better than that of divine powers. Let us therefore suppose the great and blessed God to be one infinite spirit, one conscious being, who possesses real distinct, or different powers, which in sacred language are called the Word and the Spirit. And though this difference or distinction be not so great as to allow of different consciousnesses, or to make

distinct spirits, yet these two powers may be represented in Scripture in a figurative manner, under distinct personal characters."

"May not the human mind and the will be represented in a personal manner, or as distinct personal agents, at least by a figurative way of speaking, though they are but two powers of the same soul? May I not use such language as this: 'My mind has laboured hard to find out such a difficulty; my will is resolutely bent to pursue such a course?' And many other common expressions there are of the same nature, wherein the mind and will are still more evidently and plainly represented as persons.

"And since human powers are thus represented as persons, why may not the word and the spirit, which are divine powers, be thus represented also? And why may not God be represented as a person transacting his own divine affairs with his Word and his Spirit under personal characters, since a man is often represented as transacting human affairs with his understanding, mind, will, reason, fancy, or conscience, in a personal manner?"

"With respect to the term *person*, since neither Scripture itself applies it to the Word or Spirit, nor the elder nor later writers of the church have confined themselves to the use of this term, I can see no necessity of the confinement of ourselves or others to it, when we are speaking of the pure distinctions in the Divine Nature. And when we are endeavouring to explain them in a rational manner, and to form and adjust our clearest ideas of them, I think we may use the term, divine properties, or rather divine powers, for this end. Perhaps this word, *powers*, comes nearest to the genuine ideas of things, so far as we can apply human words to divine ideas, and this word, powers, makes the distinction greater than properties, and I think it is so much the better. But we have several precedents for the use of both these terms among the ancient writers.

"The divine Logos seems to be represented, both in Scripture and in the primitive writers, as much distinct from the Father as the same essence admits of, or as distinct as may be, without being another conscious mind,

Now this seems to be something more than a mere attribute; and therefore I call the Logos *a divine power;* imitating herein both the ancient Jews and the primitive fathers, who call him frequently *Sophia* and *Nous*, and *Dunamis Theou*, and particularly Clemens Alexandrinus, who makes him *Patrike tis energeia*. But since God and his co-essential Word do not seem to have two distinct consciousnesses, or to be two distinct minds, this eternal Logos can hardly be called a person, in the common and literal sense of the term, as a distinct man or angel, but only in figurative and metaphorical language."

"The Spirit seems to be another divine power, which may be called the power of efficience; and although it is sometimes described in Scripture as a personal agent, after the manner of Jewish and eastern writers, yet if we put all the Scriptures relating to this subject together, and view them in a correspondent light, the Spirit of God does not seem to be described as a distinct Spirit from the Father, or as another conscious mind, but as an eternal, essential power, belonging to the Father, whereby all things are effected."

"Thus it appears, that, as outward speech and breath are powers of the human body, as reason and vital activity or efficience are powers of the human soul, so the great God in Scripture has revealed himself to us as a glorious Being, who has two eternal, essential, divine powers, which, in condescension to our weakness, he is pleased to describe by way of analogy to our souls and bodies; and this he doth by the terms *Logos* and *Pneuma* in Greek, and in English, Word and Spirit." †

I shall conclude this lecture by giving another view of the passage which has been entertained by some. I shall state it in the words of Dr. Lawson, and add his reasons in support of it.

He maintains that it cannot be the design of the Evangelist to treat here of the metaphysical nature and essence

† See Dr. Watts' Treatise, entitled, "The Arian invited to the Orthodox Faith," Part II.

of the Divinity, but of the relation in which he stands to us as the author of our spiritual life; and that otherwise the context would be without any connexion. He supposes that by 'the Word,' the Evangelist means (what is meant by it in all other places of Scripture) the Gospel. His translation of the passage is what I have preferred. The following is his defence of it.

"If there is any weight in the objection urged against this rendering, it appears to me to be altogether in favour of it. For it is usual with St. John, and indeed it is a propriety of style, to omit prefixing the article to the predicate, when the predicate is to be understood in a more *general* or *indefinite* sense, and to prefix the article, when it is to be taken in a more *particular* or *definite* sense. Thus in 1 John i. 6, one of the instances brought to support the objection, God is styled *Light*, without the article; because it is meant indefinitely, not restricted to any particular object. But let us see how it is circumstanced when the Evangelist uses it definitely, and to signify a particular light, for example, the light of the Gospel. It is used in this definite sense at the 4th verse of chap. i. A still more pertinent example we find at verse 8, "He was not *the* light," viz. that particular light which enlightened the world, that is, the Gospel light. Here the article is prefixed, and I believe it is to all predicates throughout this writer, which are under the same circumstance of definiteness or restriction to a particular object, with Logos, in this case. So that, supposing the Evangelist to mean the Gospel, by this word Logos, it is quite agreeable to his style to prefix the article to it. Out of the many instances to this purpose, I shall produce chap. vi. 35, 48, 50, 51, in which texts the article serves to specify or define the word to which it is prefixed, just as the English particle *the* does, and which for the same reason we use in translating it, viz. "I am *the* bread." But at the 55th verse of the same chapter, where the predicate is left more indefinite or general, the Greek article is omitted; nor can we prefix the English one in the translation without altering the sense. See also John

viii. 12. & xiv. 6. 1 John v. 1, 5. the two latter of which, according to the objection, should be rendered, 'the Christ is Jesus,' 'the Son is Jesus,' if the last clause of John i. 1. is not capable of any other rendering than, 'the Word was God.'

"St. John seems to mean no more by these words than to preface his account of the Gospel, which he styles, the *Word*, with the high original of it. This was, he tells us, from God himself; for that *in the beginning*, before it was published to the world, it 'was with God;' God was the Word, the original author and giver of it. It "was in the beginning with God," lay hid from the foundation of the world in the eternal counsels of the Almighty. All was done by him, the whole was from God; and without him was not any thing done of that which has come to pass; that is, every part of the *Gospel Dispensation*, published by Jesus Christ, was from God; and whatever works he wrought in confirmation of it, not one of them was of himself or came to pass without God."

"But then, it may be thought that, taking 'the Word' in the sense I have given it, viz. for the Gospel itself, it sounds extremely harsh to say that 'God was the Word.' To which I answer, that the harshness objected to, arising from the peculiarity of St. John's phraseology, will be found to be in favour of the translation which I have offered. For what is more common with this writer than to say of God, that 'he is light, or truth, or love?' And also of Jesus Christ, that 'he is the way, the truth, the life,' nay, 'the resurrection?' To assert that 'God was the Word,' is not more harsh than to say, 'God is love.' When St. John thus expresseth himself, he doth not mean to affirm, that God is that very thing by which he calls him, or that God and love are the same thing. We know very well his meaning is, that God is possessed of that thing or quality whereby he names him, in this instance, of love and good-will to his creatures.

"So again, when our Saviour according to this Evangelist saith, 'I am the resurrection,' he means not to affirm that he and the resurrection are one and the same

thing; but that he is the author of our resurrection to life, some such word being always understood in this kind of phraseology. And therefore when it is here asserted that 'God was the Word,' the meaning is natural and easy, viz. that he was the author or giver of the Word which came by Jesus Christ.

"Once more, with regard to the harshness of the expression, 'God was the Word.' Is it more harsh than that we have in the vulgar translation, 'the Word was God?' So far from it, that, if we were not used to it, (and use will reconcile to any thing), this last would appear intolerably uncouth; and, even under our present prejudice from custom, will appear strange enough on considering how those other similar phrases sound constructed as this has been. Reverse these sentences, 'God is love; God is light; Christ is the resurrection;' and read them thus, 'love is God; light is God; the resurrection is Christ;' and then say which of these constructions sound the most harsh; or whether the last be capable of any sense being affixed to it. The case is just the same with respect to the expression in the text. If our translators had rendered it as they have all the other phrases similar to it, viz. 'God was the Word,' we should have more easily understood it, and interpreted it in the same manner with the other texts, viz. God was the author of the Gospel dispensation.

"But it may be made an objection that this Word is said to have existed 'in the beginning,' which manner of speaking may seem to be more agreeable to the common interpretation and to refer to the person of Christ, as the Gospel did not exist till his coming into the world, and therefore had not a being, was not (as is here asserted of the Word) in the beginning. To which I answer, that nothing is more common with the writers of the New Testament, than to represent those things as having had existence from the beginning which were always designed by God to come to pass and were promised in the prophets. And as this was more especially the case of the Gospel, so we find it represented throughout the Scripture as having

existed in the eternal counsels of the Almighty. Hence the expressions which occur in 1 John i. 1, 2. Matth. xxv. 34. Ephes. i. 4. 1 Cor. ii. 7. Ephes. iii. 9. 2 Tim. i. 9. Rev. xiii. 8.

"There is one objection more which may be made, and that is, that this is not the only place in which the Word (Logos) seems to relate to the person of Christ, for that this title is given to him both at the 14th verse of this chapter and also in Rev. xix. 13.

"But in both those places this title is given him on account of his being the *minister* of the Word or Gospel to men, and relates not to his dignity in a prior state of existence, but to his office on earth. Thus 'he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood;' here is a manifest reference to his humanity; 'and his name is called the Word of God.' So that the man Christ Jesus is here styled 'the Word of God,' as having been the minister and publisher thereof to men.

"And this is quite agreeable to what the Evangelist has asserted in the other passage, viz. at the 14th verse of the chapter in which our text is, not indeed according to the present translation, 'the Word was made flesh,' but according to one no less literal and more agreeable to the original.

"For by flesh *(sarx)* is plainly meant (and all agree in it) *man.* It is equally evident that the word *egeneto,* here rendered *was made,* might, more agreeably to the original, have been rendered *became.* This verse therefore may be full as literally and more exactly translated thus, viz. 'And flesh, that is, a man, became the Word, and dwelt among us, &c.' As God had before been styled the Word, as being the author of it, so Jesus Christ is here styled the Word, as being the publisher of it. The Evangelist had asserted that God was the original author of the Word; that he did all that was done, properly speaking; that in him was that life, that word of life, which was the light of men, bringing them to the knowledge of God, whom, before, the world knew not, though he was in the world and the world was made by him. He now tells us,

that it came to pass that the Word of God was published to the world by a *man*. The Word was still the Word of God, and not of man: but whereas, in the beginning, it was with God, and no one else, it was now with men, come forth, as it were, from God, and come down from heaven into the world, being committed to a man, the man Christ Jesus, to publish it to the world. Accordingly, becoming the Word, he is said in this same verse to be 'full of grace and truth.' Now this grace and truth of which he was full, can mean nothing else than the Gospel, the Word of God *(O Logos tou Theou)*, for it is put in opposition to the *law*. 'The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth,' or true grace, that is, the Gospel, 'came by Jesus Christ,' ver. 17. Jesus Christ therefore, at the 14th verse, is not called the Word, with respect to his person in a pre-existent state, but with respect to his office in this; since the Evangelist is contrasting the *law* given by Moses with the *word* which came by Jesus Christ." ‖

Indeed, whether we adopt Dr. Dawson's translation, or 'Flesh *was* the Word or *was made* the Word,' or 'the Word was flesh or *became* or *was made* flesh,' the passage affords no ground for the pre-existence, much less the incarnation or hypostatic union of Christ; and there is one circumstance that may very naturally be taken into view in order to account for the peculiarity of the Evangelist's language; which is, that as in John's Epistles, so here the Evangelist had in view the error of the Docetæ, who maintained that Christ had no corporeal nature. Or we may suppose that the Evangelist in saying, 'that the Word was flesh,' or that 'flesh became the Word,' wished to shew that the true Word was not a spiritual *Aeon*, but a real human being. And possibly he may have intended by the expression also to shew, that since the real Word was of a corporeal nature, matter could not be depraved, as they supposed it to be.

‖ See Illustrations of several Texts of Scripture, by B. Dawson, LL. D. Rector of Burgh, in Suffolk.

LECTURE XI.

ON THE LOGOS.

JOHN I. 1—17.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, &c.

I SHALL in this lecture, for the sake of argument, change the ground I formerly took; and, in the first place, allow that 'the Word' here signifies Jesus Christ; secondly, that the sentence I have rendered 'God was the Word' should run according to the order of the common version; and, I ask, will the passage, after all, prove the Deity of Jesus, or at most any more than his pre-existence and his instrumentality in the creation of the world? I answer, no; and I proceed to prove it.

Jesus, then, as Trinitarians do not dispute, is called the Word, because he was the medium of divine communications to men; because he declared to us the mind and will of God, as we declare our thoughts to one another by words. Now, how plain it is that he who is the medium of another's communications is not the very being whose medium he is; and it is equally obvious that he is inferior to the being whose mediator he is. To deny this, is to maintain the absurdity, that the same things may be affirmed and not affirmed of the same existence at the same time. The very appellation 'Word,' by which Jesus is here distinguished, is sufficient to demonstrate that he is a distinct being from God, and subordinate to him in his operations. And whose Word is he?—that of God. Here again we perceive him to be distinct from Jehovah; as

distinct from him as he who bears a certain name is distinct from him who bears it not.

"The Word was in the beginning." What period is referred to? The first of time; for eternity had no beginning. The same word taken otherwise, in the Mosaic cosmogony, would produce the doctrine of the eternity of matter, or the absurdity, that God *created* from eternity. Now there is an obvious connexion between the words we are considering and the assertion 'the Word was God.' The assertion is, therefore, that God existed in the beginning of time. An important declaration! That God existed when he must have existed; that God existed in time, when he must have existed from eternity, comprehending all periods of successive duration in the boundlessness and immensity of unoriginated existence.

Further, the declaration that 'the Word was God' in the beginning of time, is one that does not naturally imply that he was God before the beginning of time, or that he was so afterwards. How different such language from that applied to Jehovah! With respect to him, it is never merely said that he *was*, much less that he was merely in the beginning of time, and still less that he *was God* in the beginning of time; but that 'he is, and was, and is to come, the Lord God Almighty.'

"The Word was with God." Here is a distinction of being intimated in the very terms. He who is with another is not the same existence with whom he is. Jesus, then, is a different being from God, and that he is not Jehovah is clear from the appellation 'God' being confined in the sentence to the being with whom he is said to have been. There is one Supreme in the Christian's creed. He then who in a sentence is mentioned in distinction from the one God, cannot be that exclusive Deity. The name of God is not given to Jesus. Jesus is therefore not the being to whom the appellation is appropriate. By the circumstance of being with, and by the bearing of the office of the medium of divine communications, Jesus is distinguished from God, and cannot therefore be he.

Is the first person of the Trinity ever called the Word

of the second or the third person? If he is not, the appellation 'Logos' must denote in the nature of the person who bears it something that is not characteristic of Deity; for all that can be applied to the Deity, could be predicated of the first, second, or third persons of Deity. It can at all times be said of Jehovah, that he is infinite, unchangeable, independent, and everlasting. And since the title 'Word' expresses something which cannot be affirmed of all the supposed persons in the Godhead, it expresses something which cannot be affirmed of either.

Further, let us substitute for the Word, the appellations 'second person' and 'Son,' and from the structure of the sentence, and the application of the terms of it, we will be able to form a judgment of the nature of the system Trinitarians suppose it to contain. 'In the beginning was the Son, the second person of the Trinity; and the Son, the second person, was with the Father, the first person; and the Son, the second person, was the Father, the first person!'

"The Word was God." 'I have made thee God to Pharaoh,' was language used by God to Moses. Why, in the same sense, may not Jesus be God to *our* world—God in the Christian dispensation? And what is there, then, in his being called so?

Again, when you find in the Gospel the expression, 'I am the resurrection and the life,' do you not think it natural and requisite, in ascertaining the meaning of it, to supply a word, so as to understand the passage as declaring that Jesus is the medium or the revealer of resurrection and life. When you meet with the declaration of Christ, 'This is my body,' does not a regard to consistency and rationality in the doctrines of the Gospel require us to supply the word *represents*, so as to understand the passage as asserting that the bread is a representative of the body of Jesus? On the very same principle, when we meet with the phrase, 'the Word was God,' in order to avoid the grossest absurdity, and to maintain concord among the contents and reason throughout Scripture, we are to understand the assertion as implying that the Word represents God or communicates God's will.

The office which is implied in the appellation 'Word' is that of representing God to us as we represent our thoughts to one another by words. And would it not be rational to understand the sentence as stating the same truth which would have been communicated had it been said, 'Jesus is the Word or represented God.' We must consider Jesus as called the Word of God, because he is the expression of the mind of Jehovah, and therefore in the sentence, 'the Word was God,' all that we are most naturally led to understand is, that Jesus is so bright and clear an expression of God's mind, that it was not Jesus so much as God himself that spoke to mankind. This idea is conveyed by Christ in various passages, such as, "He that believeth in me, believeth not in me but in him that sent me." And partly on account of this it is that he is called 'an effulgent ray of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person.'

When we consider how strongly the expression in question is guarded both before and behind; when we find the Evangelist, immediately before the passage, saying, 'the Word was with God,' and immediately after, 'the same was in the beginning with God,' can we here hesitate for a moment to understand the passage as a generally expressed statement of the office of Christ? We should think him void of common sense, and wishing to burlesque the Scriptures, who would refuse to give to any other similar expression on another subject, occurring in such a connexion, an interpretation in unison with the general tenor and express statements of the book in which it was found.

I have now to notice another view of these words, arising from a difference in the translation. That proposed is, 'the Word was a god.' This sounds strangely to an English ear; but those who consider how often persons of dignity and exalted character are in the Old Testament Scriptures denominated 'gods,' and who find that in this inferior application of *Theos*, our Saviour affirmed that it would have been justly his, had he claimed it, John x. 35, will see nothing in the assertion of the proem that Jesus

was a god, which, on the supposition of his mere Messiahship, is in the least singular. The fact is, that it is a strictly proper translation of the original; for it is a common rule of Greek grammar, that the want of the article before the noun indicates indefinite reference.

Origen, Eusebius, and Clemens Alexandrinus, three of the most learned fathers, who spoke the Greek as their vernacular tongue, and who addressed their remarks to persons familiar with that language from their infancy, have remarked with some of the moderns, that the lower sense of *Theos* in the last clause of the first verse is indicated by the want of the definite article. Those who know that the word *Theos* commonly has the article prefixed in the original when the Supreme Being is intended, will not be disposed to deny the propriety of this translation. I have myself adopted another translation, because the words, like many other passages of Greek writers, will equally bear different renderings; and because the account given by Irenæus of the object of the proem seems to suggest the propriety of taking *Logos* as the predicate, and *Theos* as the subject, of the proposition. Nothing, however, can be more evident than this, that had the Evangelist intended to declare the Deity of the Word, he might have done so unequivocally and distinctly by the addition of the article. And it may be remarked, as an evident general proof of the inferiority of Christ, that, while the Father is called God, and that with the article, thousands of times, the Son is not once called God with the article; and, which is of no consequence in the argument to remark, he is not even called God without the article more than once or twice.

"All things were by him, and without him nothing was that was." Now, in the first place, if Jesus was the absolute creator of this world, the efficient agency of the first and third persons of the Trinity would be excluded. To speak of one subsistence in the Trinity supporting the majesty of the Godhead, while another exerted almighty power in creation, is to contradict Scripture, which, in numerous places represents the Father as "the creator of

the heavens and the earth," and is to produce perfect distinction of being between the Father and the Son, which at once destroys the unity.

Further, the preposition *dia*, here translated *by*, and which occurs nearly three hundred times in the New Testament, universally signifies instrumental agency in distinction from *hypo*, which almost universally implies primary original operation and causation. Those who wish fully to understand the subject, can find no difficulty in ascertaining the correctness of this remark. And, on this ground, what can be plainer than that Jesus is not possessed of almighty power; that, supposing him to have pre-existed, he was but the agent of God in the production of the world; a being, therefore, both distinct from him, and inferior to him.

I now proceed, in the last place, to mention that explanation of this passage, which supposes the phrase *en arche* to mean 'in or at the beginning of the Christian dispensation;' that by 'the Word' is meant Jesus Christ; that 'all things' denote all things connected with that dispensation; and that *ginomai* does not convey the idea of natural creation.

The grounds of this interpretation are, first, that the phrase 'the beginning,' which occurs very frequently in John's Gospel, is almost always used to denote the beginning of the establishment of the Christian religion, and never once the beginning of the creation; and that as this phrase is used in the introduction of John's Epistles in relation to the same subject, and there must signify in the beginning of the Christian dispensation, it must have the same meaning in the proem of John's Gospel. Some who adopt this interpretation have, with Dr. Carpenter, thought it most natural to render the first part of the verse thus: "At the beginning he (viz. Christ) was or became the Word, or the Word was or became so."

2. It is held that the Logos must be used here as a designation of Christ, because it is thus employed in the introduction to John's Epistle, and in Rev. xix. 13, where also the Alexandrian MS. reads 'hath been called,' instead

of 'is called,' while there is no instance of its signifying a divine power in the New Testament.

3. The position that 'all things' mean all things connected with the Christian dispensation, is maintained on this ground, that the expression in John's writings never signifies the material universe; and that when it is spoken of in the Old or the New Testament, it is always under the distribution of the heavens, the earth, the sea, &c. as in Acts iv. 24. & xiv. 15. & xvii. 24. Rev. xiv. 7.

4. That the idea of creation is not contained in the passage, is grounded upon the circumstance that *ginomai* is not the word which properly expresses natural creation, but really signifies and is universally translated in John's Gospel, and in the New Testament in general, 'to do, to transact, to be, to become, or to come to pass.' And with respect to the objection arising from its occurrence in ver. 10, in connexion with the word *kosmos*, it is replied that the sense and connexion of the passage require the supplement of the word *enlightened*, (see Matth. xxiii. 15.) or that the word *egeneto* is to be taken in the sense of enlightened, or as denoting a kind of spiritual and intellectual creation, which seems to be the import of the word in ver. 13, also in chap. iii. 5, 6, 7, 8, and frequently in the Epistles of Paul. That this is the import of John's words in the passage, is further contended from the meaning of the word *kosmos*. As it signifies human beings in the latter part of the verse, it must, it is said, have the same meaning in the other, and not the material universe. It is conceived also, that the scope of the passage renders the whole of this interpretation necessary.

This interpretation of the words is not inconsistent with the account which Irenæus gives of the purpose for which they were written. The declaration, *O Logos sarx egeneto*, might have been intended to correct the notion of the Gnostics, that the Word was a celestial *Aeon*, by whom all things were created. Taken in connexion with ver. 17, the declaration was also fitted to inform them that Christ and Jesus were not distinct beings; and that Jesus Christ, a real human being, was the only proper Word.

LECTURE XII.

ON THE FIRST CHAPTER OF HEBREWS.

HEBREWS I. 1—14.

God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, &c.

TRIUMPHANTLY as this chapter has been produced to prove the Godhead of Jesus, when fairly examined in all its parts, I am persuaded you will be convinced that it affords the most satisfactory evidence to the contrary. The very first words of it are inconsistent with the notion of Christ's Deity; for surely nothing can be more evident than that he who is the Son of another, is not the being whose Son he is—is not his Father—is not in dignity and in underived existence and perfections equal to his Father. The very application of the title 'Son' to Jesus Christ, is clearly demonstrative of his inferiority of nature and attributes to him who is his Father. And were there nothing more on which to ground Anti-Trinitarianism than the appellation 'Son of God' being given to the supposed second person of the Trinity, candour and justice would, I think, demand the acknowledgment of its being more than sufficient.

Nor is this the only argument for the truth of our system that the very commencement of this chapter affords. 'God spoke through the prophets,' says the writer, 'God spoke through his Son.' The relation to God here stated to have been sustained by the prophets is that of being the media of divine communications to mankind. They were

not the primary agents in authoritatively speaking to men; they were not the authors of their prophecies; they were but the organs of God. As such they acted in a capacity inferior to the Almighty. And does it not thence appear plain and indisputable that Christ is here spoken of in a character and capacity subordinate to God? Is he not compared to the prophets? Was he any thing more than Heaven's oracle in revealing to mankind the Gospel of grace? As the prophets were inferior to the Almighty, so was he; as God only spoke through him as he did through them, he was not the absolute or primary author of his doctrines—he spoke, like the prophets, by an authority and knowledge that were imparted to him by God.

This position receives further confirmation, when we consider that God is here distinguished from Jesus by the absolute name of supremacy; and Jesus is distinguished from God as the mediator between him and men, with respect to divine communications. One being is here called God; that being alone must therefore be what the name denotes; for there is but one Supreme. If the circumstance of one being bearing this name in this instance, proves that being to be what the name denotes; surely the circumstance of another's not receiving the name, as certainly proves that he is not God. Especially is this the case when we consider that the Father is here distinguished from the Son considered of course as a person and not a nature; and the Son, be it observed also, is spoken of in his highest character and capacity, which, nevertheless, are evidently inferior and subordinate to God. The Son, then, is as inferior to the Father as he who bears the name of God is superior to him who bears it not—as he who is distinguished from another by an appellation which denotes supremacy is superior to him who has no such appellation given him to denote his nature and his powers.

The passage goes on, "Whom he hath appointed heir of all things." In order to understand the meaning of these words, it is necessary to remark that 'heir' and 'lord' were, in the Roman law, synonymous terms, as is distinctly remarked by Justinian. Accordingly, in refer-

ence to this, Paul says that "the heir differeth nothing from a servant, and is under tutors and governors, though he be lord of all." And in reference to the spiritual dominion of Christ, we find the Psalmist declaring in the person of the Almighty, "I will make him, my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth." This expression *first-born* is equivalent to *heir*, because the first-born of a family was always the heir of the paternal estate.

The doctrine, then, taught in this passage is just what is taught in that sentence of the Apostle's, "God hath made that same Jesus whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ." But he that is constituted 'the first-born or Lord' of God's spiritual creation; he that is appointed 'heir of all things' in the Christian dispensation, cannot himself be possessed of underived dignity, dominion, and glory. Had he been the Almighty, therefore, heirship or constituted lordship could not have been his; for who could have appointed him to dignity, or who could have raised him who, in the nature of things, must necessarily be raiseless. He who is "appointed heir of all things," he to whom "all authority is given in heaven and in earth," must be a creature dependant on the Almighty. Previous to receiving the spiritual dominion, he had it not; after he received it, therefore, it is only his at the pleasure of God, by whom he was "appointed heir of all things."

"Through whom he made the worlds." It is really curious to observe the confidence with which this passage is brought forward in support of the idea that Jesus not only existed before he appeared as a man, but also that he created the material universe. The preposition which is here used in connexion with *epoiesen* is *dia*, which universally denotes instrumental agency, by way of distinction from *hypo*, which is almost universally used to signify primary or original causation. Supposing, then, that the notion of creation is conveyed by the original of the word translated 'made,' and supposing also that 'worlds' is a correct translation of the Greek noun which occurs in the passage, what, I ask, would be the doctrine of the words? Would it be that the Son created the world as

an original artificer? Surely not; but that God created it by the agency or means of Jesus Christ.

This verse is parallel in the mode of its phraseology to the first verse. Now, as when it is said, "God spake through the Son," the universal doctrine of the New Testament is expressed respecting the source of our Saviour's knowledge, viz. that it was derived from him who is greater than he, and that he was not the original fountain of his communications. So when it is said, "God made the worlds through his Son," it is no less clear and no less incontrovertible that all that is attributed to Jesus in the passage is an agency that is secondary and subordinate to that of the Supreme. Indeed, as in the former sentence, so in this, the very form and structure of the phraseology are more than sufficient to determine this point.

No one ever yet supposed that he who is said to do a thing through another is the very being through whom he does it; or that when a person is said to do a thing through another, the sense in which they are said to do it is precisely the same. An artist constructs a piece of mechanism. If he employs his servants to do it, we naturally enough say, he did the work through his servants; whereas, had the work been done by his own hands, it would be said, the work was done by him or he did the work. Not in fact to admit that the words, "through whom also he made the worlds," convey the idea of instrumental agency in the Son, is either to make the sentence perfectly unintelligible or absurd. Christ, then, did not create the world by his own inherent energy and might, but by power and wisdom that were communicated by God.

To the objection that creation is a work, the performance of which cannot be predicated of a creature, it might indeed be said, that all that the words necessarily imply, when understood in the sense in which we are at present taking them, is, that Christ disposed and arranged the materials, which God spoke into existence, into that form and order that now constitute the universe; or that he acted as the organ or medium of the Divinity when matter was spoken into existence. Be these, however, as they

may, the difficulty may be removed, because the foundation of it may be shewn to be weak or unsound. In the first place, the word translated 'made' is not that which denotes absolute creation. It is indeed used in the Septuagint in the cosmogony of Moses; but, from the whole, it seems more than probable that nothing more is intended by it than the combination of matter into that structure and form in which we now see that part of it that constitutes the world. The word may be fairly and most properly translated *constituted* or *disposed*.

The proper and literal rendering of *aiones*, translated 'worlds,' is *ages* or *dispensations*. This is its natural and only proper meaning. It is so translated in almost all its occurrences in the New Testament, and in many instances must be so to make sense and coherency in the sentences with which it stands connected. Why then should it not be so translated here? Taking the word in this sense, in which the Apostle almost uniformly uses it in all his Epistles, and which is its strict and natural signification, the passage may be translated, 'through whom he constituted or disposed the ages.'

The grand object of the writer of the Epistle is to shew the superiority of the Christian dispensation to the Jewish. That dispensation was called one of the ages into which the Jews were accustomed to divide time. He terms the Christian dispensation "the age to come," thus adopting the terms in which that dispensation had been spoken of by the Jews. And now he introduces the comparison between the Mosaic and the Christian ages by the declaration that Jesus Christ, a person of dignity and high moral excellence, was the author of the new dispensation; that by him, as an authorized ambassador of God, the old dispensation was made an end of, and the new one instituted; that God, by the medium of Jesus, had now abolished the old ceremonial mode of worship, and had commenced or laid the foundation of a religion which, though not attended with the visible tokens and manifestations of the divine favour, presence, and majesty, was yet more morally glorious in its nature, as being a system in

the doctrines of which, and in the miracles which confirmed them, were discovered and were to be seen shining forth the moral attributes of the Supreme.

"Who being the brightness (or an effulgent ray) of his glory, and the express image of his person." Do these words declare Jesus Christ to be of the same essence with God? Surely not. Is brightness the essence or the substance of light? Is it not rather the appearance of it? Or is a *bright ray* any thing else than an emanation from the fountain of light—any thing but the particular direction of part of the sun's light? Christ, then, is only a being who shines forth in derived glory. He is not God; he only displays and manifests the essential and underived glory of the Supreme.

In the words, "the express image of his person," which are, like the words in connexion with them, merely figurative, Trinitarians conceive they find foundation for the doctrine of the unity of substance of the Son and the Father; or for the complete communication of the attributes and essence of Deity from the Father to the Son, so as to make the latter in personality an exact representation of the other. On this principle Justin Martyr and other fathers of the Christian church, anxiously desirous to make the comparison of Christ to the brightness of the sun comport with the doctrine of his Deity, maintained that he proceeded from the Father as the light of the sun, without division or separation from him. In like manner, the Nicene Creed speaks of him as being "light of light," and hence they argue his consubstantiality with the Father, who, they held, produced not another essence or substance in the Son, but communicated the same essence to him. To this it has been well replied, that if Christ had been generated out of the essence of the Father, he must have taken either a part of it, or the whole. But he could not have taken a part of it, because the Divine Essence is indivisible. Neither could he have taken the whole; for in this case the Father would have ceased to be the Father, and would have become the Son. And again, since the Divine Essence is numerically one,

and therefore incommunicable, this could by no means have happened.

We certainly have reason to say, in opposition to those metaphysical dogmas, that he who is the image of another cannot in any sense be the identical being whose image he is; and that, as there is but one God, he cannot be that God who is the image of that God. He who is distinguished from him who bears the title God in its absolute sense, can neither be God in essence nor in personality. In saying so, indeed, Trinitarians involve themselves in inextricable difficulties; for, as the essence and personality make up the complete image of God, Christ, if God, must be the image of his Father's essence or of his Father's personality. But he cannot be the image of his Father's essence; for this were to assert that the essence of each is different, since to speak of one essence being the image of the same essence, is absurd.

A passage parallel to this occurs in Col. i. 16, where it is said that Jesus is "the image of the invisible God." The passages, it will be acknowledged, have both reference to the same thing. Now if Jesus is called the image of the *invisible* God in respect of his essence, what consistency is there in the declaration? The essence of God being necessarily invisible, if Jesus were really God, his essence being indeed that of the Father's, would be as necessarily invisible as the Father's. It is clear also, that Christ cannot be said to be the image of the Father's personality; for sure it is, that, according to all ideas of common sense, sonship is no image of paternity, nor a being of derived properties an image of underived perfections.

Jesus, then, it evidently appears, is called "the image of the invisible God," because in him, considered as the teacher of the world, God's moral glories are reflected, as it were. The idea is more plainly expressed by the Apostle when he says, "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6. To the manner in which he

appeared as the image of God, Christ refers when he said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," and "He that seeth me, seeth him that sent me," John xiv. 9. & xii. 45. These expressions no one can reasonably deny to be figurative. Were they taken literally, they would contradict reason, and oppose Scripture, which declares that "God is *invisible*, dwelling in that light which is inaccessible and full of glory;" or they would make the mere body of Christ, which is all that could literally be seen, to be the Father.

Nothing is more common in the New Testament than the figurative use of the word *seen*, which corresponds to the figure 'image and brightness.' "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he *seeth* the Father do." "I speak (saith Christ) that which I have *seen* with my Father; and ye do that which ye have seen with your father." "Hereafter ye shall *see* the angels of God ascending and descending upon the son of man," &c. &c. The sense, then, in which the Father was seen in Christ, is not that of beholding an image of the Father's essence or of the Father's personality, but that of beholding the displays of God's wisdom and power. In Jesus we see God in a spiritual or intellectual sense, either as by apprehending the divine authority of his mission, we see the moral glories of the Supreme as they appear in that view of his character and will which Jesus has given us; or as in seeing the miracles wrought in confirmation of his mission we see the displays of the power of God. We see God manifesting himself in the only possible way in which he can manifest himself to his creatures.

As the image of God, Jesus displayed by his doctrines and his works the moral and natural perfections of God. In this sense, and in this sense alone, it is that Jesus uses such expressions as we are noticing. Accordingly in reference to the revelation of God's will he made to mankind, and using a figure exactly corresponding to that of *image* or *brightness*, Jesus says, "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in me should not abide in darkness;" clearly intimating that the sense in which his

Father was seen was a moral one, such as corresponded to that in which he was shewn to the world by the exhibition of his will, and attributes, and government, and such as is expressed by another declaration of Christ, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also," John xiv. 7, words which, you will observe, occur as the preceding context of the words which we have noticed, and which are evidently synonymous with the concluding sentence, "ye have seen him."

Were any thing more necessary to illustrate the sense in which Jesus declared that the Father was seen in him, I should advert to his own formal illustration which was given to Philip, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father, that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works;" that is, the works confirming the truth of the words. From all which it seems clear that Jesus was the image of God, or that in him God was seen, not because the miracles he wrought or the doctrines he taught were the productions of his own deity in unison and co-operation with that of the Father; not because they were the works and the words of the second person in the Trinity united to the man Jesus. His whole words go to prove, in the most unequivocal manner, that he acted merely as the agent of the Almighty; and yet in this character and capacity it is in which he implies that he is "the image of God," or in which it is true that "he who hath seen him hath seen the Father."

"Upholding all things by the word of his power." The word here translated *upholding*, might be rendered *conducting* or *governing*. 'All things' have no doubt an exclusive reference to all things connected with the Christian dispensation, especially its progress and security, and the extension of its blessings. Whose the power is that is spoken of, is not quite clear. It seems to be that of God, and not that of Christ. Supposing, however, that the power is that of Christ, and that *upholding* sufficiently well conveys the meaning of the original, the doctrine of the passage would be no more than this, that Christ by the

power imparted to him by his Father upheld all things in the Christian dispensation, so as that under his conduct the blessings of Christianity should be imparted to the world. It seems, I think, decidedly clear that the passage has no reference whatever to the upholding of the natural universe; and even though it had, in order to make one part of the passage consistent with the other, we should be necessitated to understand that in continuing to regulate the course of nature he acted merely in the same character in which he is supposed to have disposed the world at first, viz. as a secondary agent; and as the power may even on grammatical principles be referred to God, we have an additional reason for so understanding it.

"When he had by himself made a cleansing of our sins, sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high." What is here implied in the use of the phrase 'by himself,' seems to be a natural inquiry. And simple as it is, the answer seems wholly incompatible with the double view that is taken of the person of Christ. The words have some meaning, else they would not have been introduced; and what meaning can they have that does not naturally involve the supposition or the idea that Christ suffered in his whole person? The Epistle represents this cleansing of sin as having been especially accomplished by his death, which confirmed the covenant of everlasting mercy. And this death, according to the import of the words 'by himself,' must have been the death of his whole person. Whatever dignity he possessed, whether two natures or ten, 'by himself' includes the whole. But the death of Deity involves inconsistencies and absurdities. As God, therefore, he cannot be spoken of in the preceding verses. He was rewarded for his meritorious sufferings; he was exalted by God, and to God's right hand;—the same himself that is previously spoken of. To say that the human nature was rewarded for the humiliation of the divine, is to speak most inconsistently; and to suppose that the divine was exalted, is a notion too absurd to enter the mind.

"Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they;"

It is impossible that the Almighty is he of whom the writer thus speaks. Can the Creator of the universe be once brought into comparison with the very highest of his creatures? Can infinite be compared to finite? More properly may the light of the sun be compared to the feeble glimmering of a taper; or immensity to a mathematical point. To the angels or the messengers of the old dispensation, Christ may be compared; his glory and his dignity are superior to theirs; his is a nobler name; his is a more honourable dominion. To the powers of heaven he may be compared, and as far as concerns the glory and the honour arising from connexion with our world, he is superior to them. But to conceive that God is compared to his creatures is singular in the extreme!

"For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" The words are quoted from Psalm ii. 7, 8. And certainly nothing can be more evident than that they speak of Jesus in a character wholly inferior to the Supreme, though it be the highest which Christ sustains. "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." Here is appointment to an office. "Jehovah hath said unto me." Here is the one Jehovah (and there are not two) clearly distinguished from the Son. "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Here is perfect inequality intimated; here is a suppliant; and here is therefore one who is distinct from the Supreme God, and is wholly dependant on the Almighty. Surely this cannot be God himself that is spoken of; surely God cannot ask of himself; surely the second person of Trinity cannot ask a favour of the first. No. "The Lord God will give unto him the throne of his father David," is the language of another psalm. "God hath exalted him a spiritual prince and a saviour," is the language of the Apostles.

"This day have I begotten thee." No wonder that the doctrine of "eternal sonship" is exploded. Surely to maintain it, is to say that time and eternity are synonymous terms. An eternal day must first appear to be intelligible

words, or to convey a meaning that is consistent with the dictates of reason, before an eternal sonship can stand. What absurdities do such a singular hypothesis involve! The plain truth contained in this passage, with respect to the sonship of Christ, is this, that he was the first-begotten from the dead, never to die any more; he was or became this on the day of his resurrection. In this sense the phrase was evidently applied by Paul in Acts xiii. 33. & Heb. v. 5.

"I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son." These words form part of an address of Nathan to David. They promise to Solomon a kingdom to be established for ever; and Christ being understood by the writer to be the antitype of Solomon, the words are applied to him as expressive of his regal dignity. Now, I ask, how the application of this passage to Christ is consistent with the idea of his being spoken of as God? Was the circumstance of these words being addressed to Solomon, any proof that Solomon was more than man? If so, how can they prove the antitype more? How do they not naturally prove him to have been in nature the same? Surely the appellation here given to the antitype, involves the conclusion that the meaning of it when given to the antitype is not more than when it is given to the type.

"And when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." 'Going hence' or 'going out of the world,' Psal. xxix. 18, 1 Cor. v. 10, are the common expressions to signify death, and God being said to beget Christ when he raised him from the dead, this may be fitly called a second introduction of him into the world. The words are expressly to be found in the original Hebrew, Deut. xxxii. 43, as they are here cited, and refer to the children of Israel figuratively represented under the character of one being, God's anointed. This being the case, they prove nothing at all respecting the Deity of Christ; and, instead of shewing that he was entitled to supreme worship, they shew that he was to be worshiped in the same sense in which the children of Israel were.

Even allowing that the command or exhortation was given in reference to Christ, still what is proved? The word translated 'worship' generally means nothing more than homage of any kind, profound reverence and respect, expressed in any particular way. Indeed the very circumstance of this command to worship Christ being given only when he was brought into the world shews of itself that supreme worship is not meant, for supreme worship, which alone belongs to God, would not only have been given to Jesus when he was raised from the dead, but would have been his from eternity, had he been the Supreme. Had he been naturally entitled to this worship, how was it that he required the command of another in order to procure it for him? The command shews of itself, indeed, that he was a distinct being from him who ushered it forth in his behalf; and nothing can be more obvious than that the receiving of this worship is a part of his exaltation; a circumstance that can have no reference to him whose dignity is unchangeable and infinite.

"Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." This verse stands disjunctively conjoined with the preceding. The verses draw a contrast between the sacredness of the title 'angel' and that of 'the Son.' The former verse should be translated, "Who maketh the winds his messengers, and flames of fire his ministers." The idea of the writer seems to be, that so little sacredness or importance is there in the appellation 'angels,' that it is given to inanimate objects, because they were employed by Jehovah to execute his purposes. Thence he takes occasion to illustrate the dignity of the Son, by shewing that the terms in which he is addressed are such as intimate the superiority of the capacity he holds.

The passage has been translated by some very learned divines, "God is thy throne," which would convey the idea of God being the support and stability of Christ's throne, in the same figurative manner in which God is called the shield, the buckler, the hiding place, and the portion of his people. Most certainly the one translation is as war-

rantable as the other, but it signifies little in the argument which we adopt. Supposing, therefore, the common translation to be correct, what does the passage prove? Nothing more than it proved with respect to Solomon; for to him the words were originally addressed, of which any one who reads the passage throughout will be at once convinced. It is a quotation from Psal. xlv. and can apply to no other than Solomon; so that, if it prove the Deity of Jesus, it also proves that of Solomon. To those who recollect that the title 'God' is, in the Old Testament, a common designation of persons of power, eminence, and dignity, and that Christ claimed the application of the title to himself, only in this sense, it will appear not in the least surprising, that Jesus should here be so denominated. And that the name is given him only in its common inferior sense in this place, is as evident as that it is given in its supreme sense to him who anointed Jesus. For as the God who anointed him is supreme, Jesus who was anointed cannot be so also, there being confessedly but one Supreme.

That the term 'God' is applied to Christ in an inferior sense, is as evident as that it is said to be "his God" who anointed him. He who had a God could not have had applied to him the appellation 'God' in the same sense in which it is applied to the Father. Who could impart any thing to Jehovah? Yet Jesus was anointed. To whom could Jehovah render obedience? Yet Jesus is here said to have been anointed; because of his having loved righteousness and hated iniquity. Who could have been the superior of the Supreme? Yet Jesus is here spoken of as having a God. To whom can the Infinite Sovereign of the world be equaled? Yet Jesus here is said to have 'fellows,' above whom he was anointed. And are not these considerations more than sufficient to prove the subordination of Jesus to the Father. Here he is spoken of, all must admit, in his highest character—considered also of course as a whole person, of which the same things cannot be predicated and not predicated at the same time.

"Thou, Lord, hast laid the foundation of the earth." The writer implies that Solomon was a type of Jesus, and affirms that the Scripture makes this address in reference to Jesus; as made to Solomon the type, the address had a reference to Jesus the antitype, though not made to Jesus. That the address was made to the Son, is an idea founded on the mistranslation of *pros*, which being correctly translated *of* in the former verse, should have been so rendered here. And thus the notion that the address in the tenth verse was made to the Son, appears to be wholly vain. The address was made to the Father concerning or in reference to the Son; and the idea of the writer plainly is, that the eternity and immutability of Jehovah are a pledge of the perpetuity of the reign of Christ, because he is endowed with his authority and supported in the dignity of his office by the will and decree of Jehovah; and the perpetuity of his reign is one circumstance that proves his superiority to angels.

"Now, unto the KING eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise GOD, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen."

THE END.

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